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CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

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R.D. ANSELMUS WILSON, D.D.

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R.R. D.D. AIDANUS GASQUET, D.D.,
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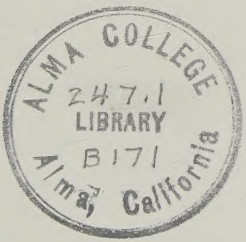
CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

VEN. FATHER AUGUSTINE BAKER'S TEACHING THEREON: FROM 'SANCTA SOPHIA'

BY

DOM B. WELD-BLUNDELL

MONK OF THE ORDER OF ST. BENEDICT



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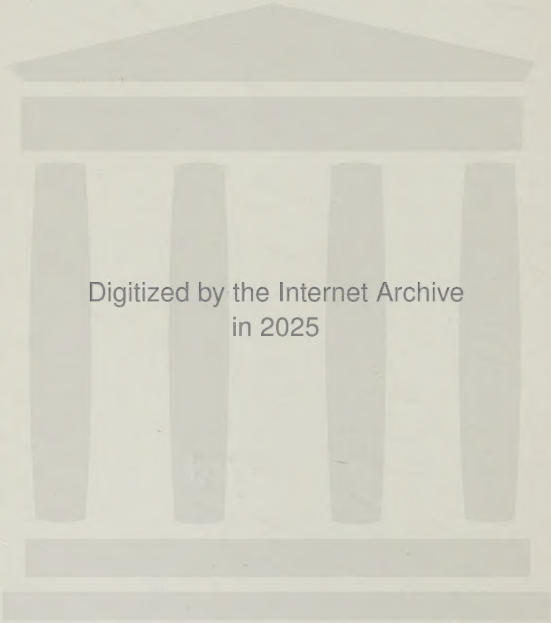

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PREFACE

It would almost seem an impertinence to commend in these pages *Sancta Sophia*, the famous compendium of Father Baker's treatises on prayer and an interior life. The writings of this venerable servant of God have been in the hands of the public for nearly three hundred years, and have proved an invaluable aid to those who would seriously aspire to the practice of contemplation. The fruits of his labour are to be seen in the lives of the many souls his teaching has led through the difficult paths by which the heights of contemplation are reached.

But though *Sancta Sophia* is useful and of interest to all aspiring to an interior life, it may be said to make its strongest appeal to the members of the English Benedictine Congregation, and to all who draw from the fountain of its spirit. For not only is *Sancta Sophia* the spiritual product of one of its most saintly sons, but it would seem to express the very spirit of the Congregation. As the constitutions drawn up in 1617, and repeatedly confirmed and amplified in succeeding chapters, built up and established the outward form and observance of the Congregation, so the writings of Father Baker appear to have largely influenced and fully expressed its spirit. For no otherwise can be understood the thorough examination to which his writings were subjected, and the subsequent official and almost solemn ratification they obtained from successive chapters, in which were gathered the leading spirits and restorers of the Congregation. This view is amply borne out by the history of

the examination and approbation, by Father Leander Jones and Father Rudesind Barlow, of the original treatises, and the history of the compilation of *Sancta Sophia*.*

No one among the restorers of the English Congregation exercised more influence than Father Leander Jones, or, as he was usually called, Father Leander of St. Martin, and Father Rudesind Barlow. They were professed in Spain, pursued their studies at Salamanca, and obtained the degree of Doctor of Divinity. In 1607 and 1611 respectively they went to Doway, and before long Father Leander became Vicar of the Spanish Mission and Father Rudesind Prior of St. Gregory's. They were men of considerable learning and theological attainments. The one held a theological chair and was Regius Professor of Hebrew for many years in Doway University; the other for a long period was Professor of Theology at the College of St. Vaast, and was largely consulted from all parts of Europe. They were held in high esteem in the Congregation, and were chosen to fill every post of responsibility and trust in its early years. Father Leander was its first President-General and Father Rudesind its second, and they were the leading spirits on the Commission deputed by the Chapter of 1633 to frame resolutions on the nature and substance of the Congregation. To these men was entrusted the task of examining and reporting on the writings of Father Baker. The opinion formed by Father Leander is best given in his own words:

'They do all contain very sound and wholesome doctrine for the direction of devout souls, and *fit and agreeable to our calling and Rule*,† and especially for the use of our dames;

* We are indebted to Abbot Butler's *Notes on the Origin and Early Development of the Restored English Benedictine Congregation* for most of the facts relating to the history of *Sancta Sophia*, and we should like to take this opportunity to acknowledge his valuable assistance in the preparation of this volume.

† The italics are our own.

the spirit of our holy Rule consisting principally in a spiritual union of our soul with God in affective prayer, and exercise of the will immediately on God, rather than in intellectual and discursive prayer, busying the understanding, as appeareth by our Rule, and the daily use of our choir office, which for the most part consisteth of aspirations and affections, and hath very few discourses.'

Father Leander, as ordinary to the nuns at Cambray, also gave his approbation to a collection of Father Baker's treatises for the use of the nuns in these words:

'I have read over diligently this book, and find it in all points worthy of allowance, full of very wholesome doctrine, and *fit for our spirit and calling.*'*

As to Father Rudesind Barlow, we find him repeatedly giving his approbation to the writings of Father Baker in his capacity of President-General. He declares that they are 'worthy to be read and read again,' and that they are 'replenished with passing good documents and very fine explications of the nature and effects of prayer, and therefore most serviceable to such as seriously seek a perfect course of life.'

But perhaps Father Rudesind's belief in Father Baker as a true exponent of the spirit of the Congregation is best shown in a practical way. When Father Peter Salvin was thinking of taking the habit, he inquired of Father Rudesind what he was principally to aim at in his religious life; and Father Rudesind Barlow, although President several times, advised him to go to Cambray to the Rev. Father Baker, 'to be by him fully instructed.' And Cressy also records, in his *Life of Father Baker*, the significant fact that

'After having for many years sustained the supremest offices in the Congregation, condescending to discharge the office of a master of novices (at St. Gregory's), he (Father

* The italics are our own.

Rudesind Barlow) thought it no disparagement to desire of the Rev. Father Baker instructions for a due performance of the said office.'

More than twenty years rolled by, and the fruit of Father Baker's teaching became apparent. There was a marked advance made among the members of the Congregation in the observance of all regular duties—of solitude, humility, obedience, and devotion—especially in the Benedictine nunnery at Cambray. Moreover, many among the secular clergy in England, and not a few among the devout laity, both men and women, made use of Father Baker's treatises 'to the wonderful profit of their souls.' Judged, therefore, by their fruits, it was clear that the writings of Father Baker were of a high order, and exceedingly profitable to souls. But the treatises were lengthy and numerous and scattered, and to get full value from them it was felt that they should be brought together, co-ordinated, and abridged into one handy volume.

The initiative in the matter appears to have been taken by the President himself, Abbot Gascoigne of Lambspring. He ordered an abridgment of the writings of Father Baker to be made, and committed the task of carrying it out to Father Cressy, one of the most scholarly members of the Congregation. Father Cressy set about his task very thoroughly. He collected together more than forty of Father Baker's treatises, and after careful perusal he abridged and arranged them as they now stand, giving to the book the title of *Sancta Sophia*. The abridgment completed, it was next submitted to the General Chapter of 1653. Father Cressy, who was present, declares that no one made any opposition 'at all to any part of its doctrine,' and that it was unanimously resolved that the abridgment should be published. To insure perfect accuracy, the General Chapter appointed three examiners to compare the abridgment with the originals, and on their approving it, the President

appointed two other censors; so that *Sancta Sophia* passed through the hands of five of the leading men of the Congregation before it was published. It was then presented to the Chapter of 1657, and received its confirmation, as is testified by Father Stapylton, himself a member of the Chapter. Thus, we see that the writings of Father Baker were first approved by Father Leander of St. Martin and by Father Rudesind Barlow, two of the leading spirits in the restoration of the Congregation; next, that they were arranged and abridged by order of the President; then the abridgment was carefully scrutinized by three examiners and two censors, and, finally, was confirmed by two succeeding Chapters. It is incredible to suppose that so much care would be taken in the preparation and examination of the writing of an ordinary member of the Congregation. Indeed, there is every indication that it was understood to be something more, and that there was in question nothing less than the very nature of the spirit of the Congregation. Hence the searching examination to which *Sancta Sophia* was subjected, and the official stamp finally affixed to it by the almost solemn approbation on two occasions of the highest authority of the Congregation. Thus, *Sancta Sophia* appears to be set forth by the restorers of the Congregation as the deliberate, permanent, official expression of the spirit of the Congregation over which they ruled.

And now to turn to the contents of the book, of which something must be said. *Sancta Sophia* is principally a book of instructions for the Prayer of Contemplation, as the subtitle of the original edition explains. What is contemplation? Broadly speaking, it may be defined as a clear, easy, mental view of a thing, a quiet, contented gazing on an object. It is the result of a diligent search into the nature, qualities, circumstances of the object. Of course, there are different kinds of contemplation, according to the nature of the object contemplated. There is a contempla-

tion which is purely philosophical. It consists in the contemplation of some natural truth or object, the nature, qualities, conditions of which are thoroughly understood by a previous course of study and reflection. It is philosophical, because it is an act principally of the intellect, the affections taking but little part in it. But there is another contemplation which is mystical, and of this *Sancta Sophia* treats. It has God for its object. By this contemplation (to use Father Baker's own expressions) the soul without discourse, without inquisitive speculations, without the use even of the internal senses or of sensible images, regards God simply as infinite, incomprehensible truth. It is a pure, simple, reposeful operation of the mind, by which God is contemplated in the obscurity of faith. And as the soul realizes Who He is, she rests in Him with the whole bent of the will and affections, as her infinite, universal, incomprehensible good. This is true contemplation, and is properly the occupation of the angels and the blessed in heaven. Without any discourse, by a simple act of intuition, they behold God in the beatific light as Infinite Good and Infinite Perfection, and they adhere to Him with the whole force of their wills and affections.

This sublime exercise is imitated more or less perfectly by contemplatives on earth. And it is the purpose of *Sancta Sophia* to teach souls who are fitted for it to ascend by successive steps to as perfect contemplation of God as is possible in this life. Father Baker shows that as our minds are almost wholly occupied with a multitude of natural objects, and our affections are closely entwined round them, the first care of the soul aspiring to contemplation must be to inquire after God by meditation, according to the words of St. Augustine: 'All good proceeds from the understanding as from its first principle.' By meditation the soul represents God as an object infinitely loving and lovable, making use of every motive that will help her to

lift up the will and affections to God, and cause them to rest in Him. The will and affections, being tied to sensible objects, can set themselves free only with much labour and some violence. But by exercise and custom, the force required to do this diminishes. Then at length the Divine Object begins to appear in its true perfect light, and the affections flow towards It more readily and freely, yet with wonderful stillness. At last, when the soul by perseverance approaches perfection, a mere glance at that Divine Object, represented in the obscurity of faith, will suffice to kindle the affections, and to cause the will to adhere and rest in Him. We will, however, leave the reader to learn from Father Baker himself the successive steps by which this end may be attained; the dispositions requisite to pursue it successfully; the guide which must be followed through dimly-lighted ways; the school of solitude and silence, and especially of abstraction, in which it is learned; and, above all, the need of great courage and perseverance.

This volume, however, is not simply a reprint of the original edition of *Sancta Sophia*, but we have ventured on the publication of a revised and modernized edition of it, and in doing this, it is felt that some apology and explanation is due to the reader. There are some to whom *Sancta Sophia* is familiar and dear; to whom the language of the book is sacred, or makes a strong appeal; who are well acquainted with writers of the period in which it was written, and can see no obscurity in its style and language. For such, it need not be said, this revision is not intended. They can enjoy the work in its original form, and there is no desire or reason for depriving them of it. But there are others, and they form no inconsiderable portion of the devout reading public, to whom the style and character of the writing have no interest. They are attracted to the work solely on account of its enlightened teaching on prayer, and the duties of an interior contemplative life.

To them the interest of the book lies in the matter, and not in the form in which it is conveyed. Indeed, we may go further. There are many to whom the style is not only of no interest, but is a positive hindrance. They are unaccustomed to the long periods and involved sentences usual in writers of the sixteenth century, so that for them the labour and effort of reading *Sancta Sophia* more than outweigh the pleasure and profit to be derived from its teaching. Besides, there are so many well-written or well-translated spiritual works by saintly authors to be found everywhere, that there is danger that *Sancta Sophia* will cease to exercise the influence its teaching deserves on the spiritual life of the day. Moved by these considerations, we have thought it desirable to make an effort to popularize *Sancta Sophia*, and to render it accessible to such readers. We have not, however, attempted to reproduce the whole of *Sancta Sophia*, but have confined ourselves to what bore more directly on contemplative prayer. This course has had the advantage of enabling us to rule out collateral matter which deals rather with the religious state than with the practice of prayer and the necessary conditions thereto, and to keep the book from attaining to unwieldy proportions. We have also thought it advisable to tone down certain expressions of the venerable author which seemed exaggerated, and at times even misleading, and to bring them into line with the current teaching and feeling of the Church. Thus, by these modifications and omissions, we have been enabled to set before the reader Father Baker's golden teaching on contemplative prayer in a comparatively small compass, and at a price which will place the book within the reach of all.

Of Father Baker* personally little need be said. He was born in Abergavenny on December 9, 1575. His

* We are indebted to Abbot Sweeney's writings for these particulars of the life of Father Baker.

parents were not Catholic. He was educated at Christ's Hospital, in London, and afterwards proceeded to Oxford University, where he was entered as a commoner at Broadgates Hall, now known as Pembroke College. Here he remained two years, and then went to London to pursue the study of the law under his elder brother. Upon his brother's death he returned to his native town and worked under his father, who managed the estates of the Earl of Abergavenny. During all this time little attention was paid to his religious training. He tells us that he led a careless, though not a wicked life. His thoughts, however, about this time took a more serious turn through a remarkable interposition of Divine Providence in delivering him from a critical position, which might easily have resulted in the loss of his life. This led him to enter more seriously into himself, with the result that he placed himself in the hands of a Catholic priest, Rev. Richard Floyd, who instructed him in the Catholic Faith, and received him into the fold of the Church. Thenceforth he abandoned the law, and turned to the sacred ministry. He made acquaintance with a Benedictine Father of the Cassinese Congregation, and shortly after entered the novitiate in the abbey of St. Justina at Padua. His health breaking down before he took his vows, he returned to England; but on recovery he made his profession before some Italian Fathers of the same Congregation, and was one of those affiliated to Westminster and the old English Congregation by Father Sigebert Buckley. Some twelve years later he went to Rheims, where he was ordained priest in the year 1619, at the age of forty-five. In the following year he was appointed chaplain to Mr. Philip Fursden and his family in Devonshire. During all these years Father Baker pursued a life of great retirement and of constant earnest prayer. He often spent as many as five or six hours, and later even

eleven hours, a day in prayer, and was sometimes favoured with ecstasies and other supernatural graces. During his stay with Mr. Fursden he led many inquirers back to the unity of the Faith by teaching them the practice of prayer, through which they obtained light and strength to follow God's holy will. Father Baker's health becoming very delicate, his superiors moved him to London, hoping that more active work might prove beneficial. During this time, in conjunction with Father Clement Reyner, he compiled the well-known *Apostolatus Benedictinorum*, and began to write some of his spiritual treatises.

In the summer of 1623 he was sent to Cambray as chaplain to a Benedictine community of nuns, which had been founded the previous Christmas by Father Rudesind Barlow, the President of the English Benedictine Congregation.* Here he remained nine years, and thoroughly grounded the community in the practice of pure prayer and the exercises of an interior life. Many of his treatises were written for the guidance of these nuns.

About 1633 Father Baker retired to the monastery of St. Gregory, at Doway. Here he remained about five years, and was then sent to England, in his sixty-third year, to labour once again on the Apostolic Mission. His attention was divided between London and Bedfordshire. At this time the pursuivants were particularly active, especially in bringing priests to judgment and execution. Challoner mentions no fewer than eighteen priests who were condemned to death in the year 1641. Father Baker himself was frequently sought and pursued, so that he had to fly from place to place to escape apprehension. After three years of toil and incessant anxiety, he was on the point of being captured by his enemies, and was deprived of martyrdom by falling a victim to a contagious fever. In hiding, and under the solicitous care of a good

* This community is now established at Stanbrook, Worcester.

lady, Mrs. Watson, the mother of one of the nuns at Cambray, in constant prayer, he resigned his blessed soul into the hands of God on August 9, 1641.

The interest, however, of Father Baker's life lies not in its outward features, which were sufficiently commonplace, but in his interior spiritual life, which is in part disclosed in his admirable treatises on prayer and the contemplative life. It is in the hope of making the teaching and spirit of this holy man of God more widely known and esteemed that this revision and abridgment of *Sancta Sophia* is now published under the title of '*Contemplative Prayer*.'

B. W.-B.

Stanbrook Abbey,
Xmas, 1906.

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CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

BOOK I

ON AN INTERNAL LIFE IN GENERAL

CHAPTER I

SOULS MAY ASPIRE TO CONTEMPLATION IN EVERY STATE OF LIFE

School of contemplation.

By the unanimous testimony of mystic writers, solitude is the only proper school of contemplation—that is to say, a condition of life in which the soul is free externally from the burdens, temptations, and solicitudes of the world, and free internally, at least to a considerable extent, from inordinate affections for worldly or carnal objects, so that the soul may have leisure to attend to God, Who deserves our thoughts and affections, and to practise such mortifications and prayer as will dispose her to an immediate and perfect union with Him.

May be practised in the world.

Solitude is to be found more perfectly and permanently in the religious state than in the world; indeed, the religious state affords advantages scarcely to be found elsewhere for the pursuit of contemplation. Still, it must not be thought to be confined to that state. Even in the world, in a secular state of life, God has often guided souls into these perfect ways, affording them as much solitude

and internal freedom of spirit as He saw was necessary to bring them to a high degree of perfection.

Denied to no state.

Indeed, it is a remarkable proof of the abundant overflowing riches of Divine goodness that the practice of contemplation, the noblest of which a rational soul is capable here or in heaven, is not confined to caverns or deserts, nor limited to religious communities, the intellectually gifted, or the learned. No, even the poorest, simplest soul in the world, if she will faithfully correspond with the internal light and attraction of God's Spirit, may securely arrive at the mountain of vision, and even more speedily than learned theologians, profound scholars, or secluded hermits.

Indeed, history and more recent experience show that God not uncommonly communicates the light and grace of contemplation to simple women endowed perhaps with less brilliant intellectual gifts, but with stronger wills and affections for God, than the ablest men. A reason for this may be that in their case God reaps the glory of His freely-bestowed graces, for if contemplation usually attended on natural endowments, it might be claimed as due to natural abilities and efforts. Another reason may be because substantial holiness (and its perfection, contemplation) consists more in the operations of the will than of the understanding; and as women are usually more constant in their affections and steadfast in their wills than men, it is no wonder that God more often finds them fit subjects for His graces.

Moreover, women as a rule are less encumbered with anxious business, their employments being principally domestic, so that they repair oftener to church, are more assiduous in their devotions, and take advantage of the Sacraments more frequently than men; hence they are called by the Church the 'devout sex.'

Though these instructions are intended principally for

religious aspiring to contemplation, yet being a debtor to all who would tread in these ways, I will show briefly how others also may use them by distinguishing what is common to all aspiring to contemplation from what is special to the religious state.

Ecclesiastics in the world.

In the world there are two classes of aspirants to contemplation, or perfection in prayer, namely, (1) ecclesiastics and (2) lay persons.

First as regards ecclesiastics or priests. They, perhaps, ought to aspire to contemplation even more than simple religious, for their sublime office (according to the judgment of the Saints), by which they intercede with God for the whole Church through the immaculate Sacrifice and fervent prayer, supposes them to have attained a habit of recollection. And if they have the care of souls they will need far more stability in recollection than simple religious, if their work is to be done purely in and for God, and if their union with Him is to remain unbroken. Besides, by their profession their obligations are not far removed from the vows of the religious life, for (1) they owe obedience to superiors, though not in every detail of their lives; (2) they profess chastity; (3) they ought to have but little attachment to earthly goods, for whatever is beyond their necessities and the demands of hospitality they can little more dispose of than religious without some wrong to the poor and suffering; (4) and though their employments require more intercourse with others than does the religious state, still they are as much obliged to disengage their affections from riches and worldly interests as are the others. They are also bound to free themselves from distracting employments not belonging necessarily to their calling.

For these reasons, in the early fervent days of the Church scarcely anyone presumed to undertake this sublime calling till he had spent many years in a kind of religious life

of solitude, mortification, and assiduous prayer. Witness St. Basil, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Gregory Nyssen, St. Chrysostom, St. Augustine, or St. John Damascene. Yet, after all this, it is wonderful to see how unwillingly and fearfully they undertook the care of souls,—what excuses, prayers, and flights into the desert! And when at length they yielded to God or men they were far from thinking themselves exempt from the contemplative exercises of abstraction, mortification, and prayer. On the contrary, they stole time from necessary refection and sleep to employ in recollection, well knowing that their labours would not be acceptable to God if they proceeded not from grace obtained by prayer.

But the best proof and example of these obligations is our Blessed Saviour Himself. Though by virtue of the hypostatic union He was full of every grace, yet to set an example He spent thirty years in solitude, silence, and the internal exercises of a contemplative life before He took upon Himself the task of converting and instructing others. And during the laborious exercise of the prophetical office, besides much prayer practised openly, the Gospel expressly states that He often retired at night with His disciples to pray; and when a special work was to be done, as the mission of His disciples to preach, He would pass the whole night in prayer. Moreover He frequented deserts, and utterly refused to meddle in secular affairs or controversies.

An ecclesiastic, then, for his own sake and for love of his flock, should account himself bound to practise internal contemplative exercises, especially pure spiritual prayer, which alone will sanctify him and bring a blessing upon his ministry. Hence St. Florentius, a holy Bishop of Utrecht, afterwards of Münster, when remonstrated with for spending much time in prayer, as though hindering the discharge of his episcopal duties, returned an answer very becoming an

enlightened Bishop: 'What! do you account me mad because, having so many sheep under my charge, I bestow so much time on prayer?'—implying that it was only by prayer he could hope to perform his episcopal duties effectually and obtain a blessing upon them.

Such are the duties of ecclesiastics. And if they are conscious of neglect in this matter they may use these simple instructions, which in the main are suitable enough for them, if they eliminate certain particulars which peculiarly concern religious.

CHAPTER II

THESE INSTRUCTIONS PROFITABLE TO SECULARS

As regards lay persons.

MUCH in these instructions will be found applicable to all who are invited by God to aspire to contemplation, for we must not suppose, as was said before, that religious only tend to perfection. There are devout-minded souls in the world who do not feel called to embrace the religious life. Some are married or are otherwise hindered. Others are incapable of the religious life or have no inclination to it. Still all, whatever their age or condition, may be invited by God to enter the ways of contemplation. To all such, with slight modification, these instructions will afford useful help. With this object they will do well to take into consideration the following advice:

A devout soul drawn by God to contemplation in a secular state should consider herself bound, though not so strictly as a religious, to practise these essential duties: (1) to have a strong resolution to pursue the ways tending to contemplation; (2) to take care to observe and obey inspirations, and dispose herself so as to perceive them more and more clearly; (3) to practise the internal and external mortifications sent her by God or which belong to her state; (4) to pursue internal prayer in its various degrees according to the guidance of God's Holy Spirit. In these general duties there is little or no difference between a lay person and a religious.

There are instructions in this book which belong peculiarly to the religious state, such as advice applying to a life of solitude or of strict enclosure. But even from these a secular tending to perfection may derive profit by applying to his own use so much of the spirit of the religious life as discretion shall show to be beneficial. How they may derive benefit.

To illustrate this: First, though a secular person is not obliged to retire into a solitude as strict as that of a religious, still he must allow himself daily sufficient solitude and silence for an adequate practice of internal prayer. He should not engage in distracting business or solicitudes that do not belong necessarily to his state of life. Even necessary business he must perform with the utmost internal quietness and recollection, carefully avoiding anxiety of mind or a desire to multiply riches. And as for idle conversations, complimentary visits, or dinner-parties, he must not indulge in them as freely as others or as he did formerly. He should set a greater value on his time, and what he can borrow from his employments should be devoted to the advancement of his soul in contemplation. Indeed he will soon find how great is the hindrance of idle conversations, dissipation of mind, engagement in unnecessary affairs or sensuous friendships, so that he will carefully avoid them.

Secondly, such a soul should studiously imitate the internal solitude belonging to a religious, withdrawing her spirit from affection to outward things—riches, pleasures, the thought of creatures, or worldly objects. She should, therefore, perform her external duties in reference to God and in subordination to her principal design, which is to perfect her spirit in divine love. She should not account herself absolute mistress of her worldly goods, but as God's steward, to manage them so as to promote His glory. While possessing wealth she should exercise poverty of spirit, renouncing proprietorship and affection for her riches;

nor should she use them for sensible enjoyment or for mere display. Internal solitude, introversion, detachment of spirit she should constantly practise till they grow to be habitual with her; without them she will never be in a disposition to attend to Divine inspirations and to exercise internal prayer—practices essential to a state tending to contemplation.

Thirdly, in imitation of religious obedience, she should conduct herself towards those whom God has placed over her with profound submission of spirit, obeying them—or rather God in them—with much purity of intention. At first she should place herself under the guidance of a spiritual director to teach her how to discover the exercises of prayer and mortification suitable for her. She should exercise the utmost prudence in making choice, and should commend the matter to God in her prayers, begging of Him to provide her with one of sufficient knowledge and virtue, and especially one who is experienced in these interior ways so much exalted above the exercises of prayer commonly taught and practised. And when God has found her a director, she should obey him with sincerity and humility, yet without prejudice to the obedience she should give principally to her interior Master, for she owes Him obedience as much as any religious.

Fourthly, although the soul is not bound by vow to any rule, still she should reduce her life to some order and regularity, arranging her retirements, reading, prayer, refection, sleep, and the rest, as prudence and her director shall determine. A rule observed with discretion, not in a narrow, wooden manner, is requisite in an interior life. The soul unrestrained by any rule or custom will be unstable and uncertain in the discharge of even necessary duties.

Similarly reflections may be drawn from the other instructions peculiar to the religious state; and if the soul pursue internal prayer diligently, God will not fail to

provide her with sufficient light and spiritual strength. And though God has not given her a vocation to religious life, He has enabled her to enjoy in the world one of its principal advantages. She may, therefore, reasonably think that for her particular good God did not call her to the religious state.

And let not such souls fear inconvenience by renouncing worldly anxiety and temporal riches. As the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* confidently asserts, those whom God calls from worldly solicitudes to an interior life may safely rely on the special care of Divine Providence over them and all that belongs to them. For though He should call the soul into a desert, where there is no visible means of subsistence, or bid her lead an abstracted life in the midst of a city, let her not fear, but refer the care of her maintenance to Divine Providence, who by some means, ordinary or extraordinary, will provide for her; and if at times means of subsistence should be scarce, He will abundantly recompense her with interior celestial delicacies far more desirable. Examples of God's wonderful care over such souls as are peculiarly His are to be found in abundance in ecclesiastical history, ancient and modern. So that to the end of time the words of the Psalmist will have their fulfilment: '*The rich of the world have been brought to want and hunger; but such as truly seek the Lord shall not go unprovided of any good thing.*'

CHAPTER III

THE ACTIVE AND THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

Who are said to aspire to perfection.

ALTHOUGH all Christians should aspire to perfection, lead spiritual lives, and sanctify their actions and employments by prayer, yet the effectual practice of this obligation is so rare that, in ordinary speech, those only are said to aspire to perfection who have been called by God from the solicitude of worldly affairs to make the love and service of Him the only business of their lives. In a state of adequate abstraction and solitude they pass their days in serving, adoring, loving, meditating, and praying to God, and endeavour to attend to and follow His Divine inspirations. This is ordinarily and perfectly accomplished in the religious state, but if attempted by others, then it should be in a course of life, as we have said, in a measure separated from the world.

A natural propensity to seek God.

In all souls there seems to remain even naturally a certain propensity to seek God, though not for Himself, but for the satisfaction of nature and of self-love. It is a kind of natural devotion, and is found in heretics, Jews, and even heathens, more or less according to their several dispositions and characters, the variety of which is astonishing and almost incredible. When grace unites itself to such propensities, it promotes and increases them, rectifies what is amiss, and especially purifies the intention, causing the soul to seek God for Himself alone. It in no

way alters the characters themselves, but conducts souls in ways suitable to their several dispositions by an almost infinite number of paths, yet all tending to the same end—the union of our spirit with God by perfect love.

The active and contemplative lives.

These various dispositions and ways may be conveniently reduced to two main groups—the active and the contemplative. They both aspire to perfect union in spirit with God by love. Both use the same necessary means for its attainment—mortification and prayer. But the manner of their prayer and of their union with God, and, consequently, of their mortification, is very different. The root of this difference is the variety of natural dispositions and propensities to internal ways.

For, first, the propensity in some souls inclines them to busy their imagination, and to form motives of the divine love by internal discourse, so that without such considerations and use of images, they can seldom efficaciously fix their affections on God. Such dispositions are not patient of much more solitude or recollection than is necessary to maintain a right intention in outward actions and works of charity, to which they are strongly inclined. The mortifications, too, most willingly practised by them are external and often voluntarily assumed. The love and union produced by such means is often vigorous, but less pure and spiritual. It is apt to find expression in sensible devotion and tenderness. The state and perfection of these souls is called the state and perfection of the active life.

Again, others are naturally of a propensity to seek God in the obscurity of faith, with a more profound introversion of spirit, with less activity in their sensitive nature, and without the use of sensible images, yet with far greater simplicity, purity, and efficacy. Consequently such souls are not much inclined to external work, unless by secret inspiration or by the commands of superiors. They seek to purify

themselves and inflame their hearts with love of God by internal, quiet, pure acts in the spirit, by abstraction from creatures, and by solitude, external and especially internal. In this way they dispose themselves to receive the impulses and inspirations of God, whose guidance they strive to follow in all things. And the mortifications practised by them, though less noticeable, are far more efficacious and profound, penetrating to the most secret disorders of the spirit. By the constant pursuit of such exercises their spirits become naked, empty of alien affections and images, and the Divine Spirit alone lives and works in them, affording light to see and strength to subdue self-love in all its ramifications. By these means they attain to a union with God more constant and immediate than those in the active life, and acquire a love more masculine, pure, and divine. The state of these happy souls is called the state and perfection of the contemplative life.

Most are of a mixed propensity.

Though all dispositions may be ranged conveniently under these two states, we must not suppose that each soul is in disposition entirely either active or contemplative. For the most part dispositions are mixed, partaking more or less of each, but such are denominated from that state to which their disposition more strongly inclines them.

From this arises the chief difficulty in leading souls in internal ways, for each must be put in a way suitable to her disposition, otherwise small progress can be expected. The diversity of dispositions is principally discerned in the manner of prayer. If an active spirit be compelled to internal solitude, to quiet, affective prayer of the heart alone —the method of contemplative souls; or if, again, a contemplative spirit be long fettered with the methods of discursive meditation, in which the imagination has a principal share; or, lastly, if a person with a mixed disposition be confined strictly to either kind of prayer, he will find himself entangled with insuperable difficulties and

scruples, and so far from making considerable progress, he will, on the contrary, be in danger of ceasing to seek God at all by internal ways.

Of beginners.

Even in the case of souls with a strong propensity to internal operations of the spirit, and consequently to contemplation, it will be found ordinarily that at the beginning they are of an active, extroverted temper of mind, and will be incapable of much solitude and of operations purely spiritual. They will have to begin with exercises of the imagination and with discursive prayer, and this because, by their former negligent life, their minds are so filled with the images of creatures, and their hearts so disordered by inordinate affections and passions, that the will alone, with its immaterial acts, has not the power to expel the images or to command the passions. Hence the necessity of introducing by meditation good images to expel the bad ones, and of finding motives to quiet the passions and turn them to God. Having accomplished this by a short course of active exercises, such souls adopt henceforth the quiet, spiritual exercises of the contemplative life which are suitable to their natural propensity.

CHAPTER IV

THE ACTIVE AND CONTEMPLATIVE STATES COMPARED

The contemplative state more perfect.

Of these two states the contemplative is acknowledged to be the more perfect. Its exercises are more spiritual, more independent of the body and its sensible faculties, and, consequently, it is more angelic and divine. It is represented to us by our Lord in the person of Mary, who is said to have chosen the better part, which shall never be taken from her. It is the imperfect exercise of that employment and beatitude which will be eternal in heaven. The active life is typified by her sister Martha, who agitated her mind with much exterior business and many solicitudes, which, though good and praiseworthy, were inferior to Mary's freedom and inward attention to our Lord.

Easier and safer.

As the contemplative state is the more perfect, so is it easier and more secure from the errors and illusions which may be occasioned by an indiscreet use of prayer. For a contemplative soul tends to God, and works almost entirely with the heart and blind affections of the will, which pour themselves upon God apprehended in the obscurity of faith. She inquires not what He is, but believes Him to be that incomprehensible Being Who can be comprehended by Himself alone. She rejects all images and representations of Him. She transcends all operations of the imagination, all subtlety and curiosity of the reason. Yea, she seeks nought but union with God by the most

pure and profound affections of the spirit. What possibility is there here of illusion or error for the soul? If the devil suggests to her mind a thought—his only means of seducing her—she will at once reject it, for she is taught to reject all images, and to hold her internal senses almost wholly void during her spiritual acts. If he assaults her by stirring up unlawful affections, what is more secure than to adhere to God with the whole bent and affection of the soul? Neglecting and scarcely observing the disorders which may unwillingly arise in her inferior nature, she abides secure, exalted into a region of light and peace.

All are capable of it.

As a further proof of the excellence of the contemplative state as compared with the active, experience shows that contemplation may be exercised as perfectly by the ignorant (provided they are sufficiently instructed in the rudiments of the faith) as by the most learned. For talents are not required for it, but only a strong affection of the soul. This explains why simple unlearned women are more often favoured with supernatural contemplation than men, especially such men as are much given to profound studies. Moreover—besides the fact that God loves to reveal Himself to the humble and the simple—there is usually in the disposition of women a certain tenderness and compassion which dispose them to fervour of charity. And when their affections are fixed on their proper Object, God, they adhere to Him ardently and firmly, and arrive easily and quickly, as compared with men, to perfect contemplation, which consists, as we have seen, in the adhesion of the will to God, and scarcely at all in the acts of the understanding.

In practical matters the end is what is principally regarded. The more worthy the end, the more we are encouraged to make every effort and to overcome every obstacle in the attainment of it. As this book is intended to encourage and instruct persons aspiring to perfection in the contemplative life, reason requires that we should treat more

precisely of the end of the contemplative life. This is indeed of such excellence, that those who have eyes to see and palates capable of spiritually tasting will think no difficulties, no weariness, no labour, a too great price to give in order to purchase it.

Further excellence of contemplative state.

It has been said that the general end of man's creation, to which all Christians, especially religious, should aspire, is a perfect and constant union in spirit with God by love—that is to say, uninterrupted perfect prayer. But the same end is differently sought by active and by contemplative souls, for in an active life the union with God is not so immediate, nor so stable, nor so sublime, nor so much in the supreme portion of the spirit, as it is in the contemplative state. As the exercises of the active life are much in the imaginative and discursive faculties of the soul, so is likewise the union. The effects, indeed, of the union are more perceptible, and are, therefore, more apt to cause wonder in others; but being much in the sensitive nature, it is not so calm, spiritual and peaceful, and, consequently, not so stable nor so immediate as is that of contemplatives. Moreover, the charity of souls in the active life is strong and vigorous, and its outward effects are striking and cause great edification. Their works are multiplied, for strong love is a passion that delights in labours; but the deeds of contemplatives, except when called to external employments by a special inspiration, are but few and small, and but little noticed or esteemed by others. Yet these insignificant actions may be preferred incomparably by God to the others, as being far more supernatural and divine, and as proceeding from an immediate and certain impulse of God's Holy Spirit, whose light and touch such souls perceive far more clearly and follow more faithfully, even in their ordinary actions, than those in the active state do even in matters of the highest importance. Finally, the charity of contemplatives, though perhaps less busy, is yet far more

profoundly rooted in the centre of the spirit, causing a union much more spiritual and divine.

St. Bernard, perfectly experienced in the ways of the contemplative life, writing to certain Carthusian Fathers, excellently expresses this union in these words: 'It is the duty of others—who lead active lives in the world or in religion—to serve God; but it is yours to adhere inseparably to Him. To others it belongs to believe, to know, to love, to adore God; but to you to taste, to understand, to know familiarly, and to enjoy.' In harmony with this sentence of St. Bernard, mystic writers teach that the special end of the contemplative life is the attainment of an habitual and almost uninterrupted union with God in the summit of the spirit. It is a union such as will give a possession of God with fruition—a real experimental perception of the Divine presence in the depth and centre of the spirit, which is fully possessed and filled with Him alone. It excludes not only all deliberate affections to creatures, but in a manner even their images; at least, in so far as they may distract the soul from God.

The effects of this blessed, perceptible presence of God in perfect souls are unspeakable and divine. He is in them as a principle of their actions, internal and external. He is the life of their life and spirit of their spirit. He is their end, directing their actions and being to Himself alone. He is all in all to them. He is a light to direct their steps and to regulate all their works, however unimportant. In all things God's Holy Spirit leads them on to a still more intimate union with Himself. He is a shield to protect them in temptation and dangers, an internal force and life to enable them to do or suffer whatsoever He wills. They not only believe, but even feel and taste Him to be the universal Good. By continual converse with Him, they attain to detachment of spirit; to an absolute internal solitude, in which they transcend and forget all

created things, especially themselves; to a certain heavenly-mindedness and fixed attention on God alone, even amid employments which to others would be ever so distracting. Finally, they enjoy a sweet knowledge of all His infinite perfections, and maintain a strict application of their spirit to God by a love which is above knowledge, reposing in Him with the whole extent of their will; so that they become in an inexpressible manner partakers of the Divine nature, one spirit, one will, one love with Him. They become, as it were, deified, and enjoy as much of heaven here as mortal man is capable of. Hence St. Bernard aptly says: 'The love of God, or Love which is God, the Holy Ghost, pouring Himself into the love of man, inclines and applies man by love to Himself; and thus God, loving Himself by man, makes both his spirit and love to be one with Himself.'

A blessed state indeed!—the portion chosen by Mary, which our Lord Himself calls *optimam partem*, the best of all Divine graces which He can bestow in this life. With this He enriched in a special manner His tenderly loved friends, St. John the Evangelist, St. Mary Magdalen, and, above all, His own most beloved Mother.

Happy, then, are the souls upon whom God bestows an ambition to strive seriously and effectually for an end so heavenly; whom He not only qualifies with a natural propensity to the internal ways of divine love, but leads into a state of life detached from the world, its vanities, and solicitudes; whom with supernatural light He directs in the secret ways of His love; on whom He bestows resolution to persevere through discouragement, persecution, and aridities, through the opposition of concupiscence from within, or of the world from without, or of the devil combining with both, against a purpose most hurtful to him and destructive of all his aims.

And for a further encouragement to pursue so glorious

an undertaking, they may observe that, besides the union with God just described, in which the soul actively concurs, not only in the fruition, but also in the immediate disposition to it, there are yet other degrees of union altogether supernatural, which are graciously and freely bestowed by God on some. In these He in a wonderful manner affords them interior illuminations and touches far more efficacious and divine. The soul by a simple consent yields itself captive to God, and suffers Him to work His pleasure in her, being neither able to further it nor to hinder it. Even though these unions should last but for a moment, they illuminate and purify the soul more than many years spent in active exercises of spiritual prayer and mortification.

Of passive union.

CHAPTER V

THE DIFFICULTIES OF A CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE AND THE NEED OF A STRONG RESOLUTION

Need of resolution.

As the end of the contemplative life is so noble and divine that even the blessed in heaven pursue it alone, it follows that the principal duty for those who are called by God into the interior ways of the Spirit is to long for this union with their whole heart. They should also form a resolution, through God's help, to pursue this undertaking through light and darkness, in spite of obstacles, esteeming it cheaply purchased even at the cost of all that is to be found in creatures. The firm establishment of this resolution is of so much importance that if it should fail for any temptation however fierce, the whole undertaking will be ruined. Devout souls should, therefore, often renew their resolution, especially in times of difficulty, which are sure to occur; for this reason they will often be reminded of it during the following instructions.

It should not be esteemed presumption to aspire to this sublime end. It is, on the contrary, a praiseworthy ambition, most acceptable to God. The root of the desire is humility joined with the love of God; for it proceeds from a contempt and holy hatred of self, from whom we desire to fly, and also from love of God, to Whom alone we desire to adhere and to be inseparably united.

Happy, then, is the soul finding in herself an habitual longing for this union, if she seeks to slake her thirst by continually approaching the Fountain of living water, labouring to that end by daily internal and external acts. The mere tending to this union, in which our essential happiness consists, has in it some degree of happiness, and is an imperfect union disposing the soul to a perfect one. By such efforts we get little by little out of the natural man into God. Indeed, that no exterior mortifications or observances will imprint true virtue on the soul without this desire and tending may be seen by the example of Suso. For the first five years of his religious profession he found no spiritual satisfaction at all, notwithstanding all his care and exactitude in the observances and mortifications prescribed by his rule. He saw plainly there was still something wanting; what it was he could not tell, till God was pleased to teach him. It was the need to tend continually in spirit to the divine union. Without this, austerities and observances served him little or nothing; for they proceeded principally from self-love, self-opinion, and the gratification of the natural man, even when crossing it.

Let, then, nothing deter the soul from persevering faithfully in her resolution. No, let not even the sight of her daily defects, imperfections, or sins, dishearten her; but let her be encouraged even from her falls, and from the experience of her own weakness, to run more eagerly and to adhere more firmly to God, by Whom she will be enabled to overcome all obstacles.

The length and difficulty of the way.

That sincerity may be observed in these instructions, and that foolish expectations may not be raised, the devout soul must be informed that the way to perfection is, first, very long; and, secondly, that there are many bitter temptations and crosses painful to her corrupt nature. It is a way which contradicts and destroys the vain ease, interests, and pleasures of the natural man, and teaches the

soul to die to self-will and self-love, and to raise herself out of her inferior nature, that she may live in a region above nature, in the spirit, where she will find nothing but light, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. But so far from being discouraged by these difficulties, if she be truly moved by God's Spirit, she will redouble her efforts to attain the end for which alone she was created. Lastly, she will find a further incentive in the thought of the danger of a negligent, tepid life, and the security and benefit of being truly in the way to perfection, even though she should not attain to it in this life.

How long and tedious must be the way to perfection, even to souls well disposed by nature and education—for to others it is almost impassable—may be understood by any intelligent soul who recalls her own experience. How obstinate, inflexible, and tenacious is self-love! How long it takes to subdue even one habitual evil inclination and affection! Thus, what fallings and risings in her passions and corrupt desires! When she thinks them subdued and almost forgotten, they rise again and renew the combat with as great or even greater violence than before. Not till the root, self-love, is withered, so that we do not deliberately suffer it to spring forth and bear fruit—for utterly killed it cannot be in this life; not till we have lost at least all affection to every sinful desire, will perfect charity reign in our souls. Not till then can we expect perfect union in spirit with God, for charity lives and grows according as self-love diminishes, and no further.

On entering into the internal ways of the spirit, souls are led by a dim light, which discloses only the more obvious defects and imperfections; but by persevering in mortification and prayer, light will grow, and as it grows they will discover a thousand secret impurities in their intentions—self-seeking, hypocrisy, and closely veiled designs of their corrupt nature. The soul will find herself pursuing her

own inclination and aims even in her best actions, cherishing the natural man in one way while she mortifies it in another, favouring pride while exercising humility. A clear light to discover the innumerable defects in our sensitive nature, and the more dangerous and secret ones in the superior soul, as also courage to combat them successfully, can be the fruit only of long-continued prayer and mortification.

The want of a due consideration of this is a reason why some souls, after they have made progress in internal ways, become disheartened, and are in danger of abandoning them. Being at first usually helped by God with sensible devotion, which our holy Father calls *fervor novitius*, they, with much zeal and (as they think) with good effect, begin to exercise mortification and prayer. Afterwards, the sensible fervour ceasing, as it seldom fails to do, they are left with a newly begotten light, by which they discern defects formerly unobserved, and which they erroneously think were not there before. Whereupon, fearing that they are receding instead of advancing, they yield to discouragement, and suspect that they are in a wrong way. This error proceeds from the notion that, because in the time of light and devotion the soul is carried with fervour to God, and experiences little opposition in her inferior nature, therefore she is well advanced on the way to perfection. But it is far otherwise. Nature is not so easily conquered, nor is the way to perfection so short or easy. Many changes must she expect, many risings and fallings; sometimes in light, sometimes in darkness; at one time enjoying the repose of the passions, at another engaging in a combat fiercer than before. How many times these changes are repeated God only knows, before the end approaches.

It may happen to such souls that even their former defects will seem harder to check after they have made some progress. For, combating their corrupt nature in its

crooked ways, and cut off from the vanities of the world, they find themselves in continual conflict and pain. Besides, they feel the loss of the diversions and conversations with which they dissipated troublesome thoughts or anxiety in their negligent secular life. But if they would take courage, and, with no more relaxation than discretion allows, would turn to God by prayer for a remedy, they would find that such temptations are a sure sign that they are on the right way, and that God will give them the victory and fill them with comfort, when He sees it to be for their good.

Many steps to be taken.

From these considerations it is apparent that quick attainment of perfection is not ordinarily to be expected. And where extraordinary lights and visitations appear in souls not thoroughly mortified, it is to be feared that there is some secret corruption, some deeply rooted pride, perhaps, which has exposed them to illusions, so that their state is a very dangerous one.

The same will appear from the nature and degrees of internal prayer, in the perfection of which is to be found the end of the contemplative life. (1) Ordinarily the soul must begin with discursive prayer, in which she tarries God knows how long; perhaps all her days, if she is not diligent. (2) Then, when her affections abound, so that discursive prayer is of little efficacy, she should turn to the exercise of the will. Here a long time must ordinarily be spent before she can chase away distracting images of even a grosser kind, and before the heart is so filled with the Divine Spirit that, without deliberate choice, it will break almost continually into aspirations and pure upliftings of the superior will. (3) Here,* again, in the happy state of aspirations, the soul may have to abide a long while, for there are almost infinite degrees of aspirations, each exceeding the former in purity, before she is ripe for a passive union.

* This degree of prayer appears to correspond with St. Teresa's second degree of prayer, which she calls the Prayer of Quiet.

(4) Having reached that degree, a long time is likely to be spent, often in woful obscurities and desolations, before she arrives at last to (5) the state of Perfection. These degrees of prayer are attended by proportionate degrees of mortification. No wonder, then, that few, even of religious, attain to the highest degree. This arises partly, perhaps, out of ignorance by placing perfection in the exact performance of external observances, which, however good, when rightly used, often are of little profit, being undertaken for natural ends, and serving to nourish pride and self-love rather than the spirit of prayer. And partly it may arise from want of diligence in pursuing constantly the way which they know leads to perfection.

Perfection usually attained late in life.

For these reasons mystic authors teach that though it is of great advantage to a soul to tread interior ways from her youth, before her soul is darkened by habits of sin, still, she will hardly arrive at active union and experimental knowledge of God's presence till she reaches almost declining age. For though natural evil inclinations may be mortified to a considerable extent, yet till she is advanced in years there will be too much bodily vigour and activity, and instability in the imagination, to have the quietness and calmness of mind necessary for union. Others there are, of a good propensity and pious education, who have attained to it in a few years, though they only began late in life, as they supply lost time by an heroic resolution and a vigorous, well-directed pursuit of the spiritual life. As for those reared in vice, extraordinary grace will be needed before they can enter on contemplation.

Except in a few cases.

What has been said of the length of the way and the requisite conditions must be understood only of the ordinary course of God's providence. God is the Master of His own graces, and may bestow them upon whom He pleases and when He pleases. He may miraculously increase His grace, or He may confer supernatural favours

before the time at which souls are usually ripe for them, as He did to St. Catharine of Siena and others, who in their youth were favoured with a passive union. Mystic authors include also the case where a well-disposed soul approaches the hour of death before attaining perfection. Then God sometimes supplies in an extraordinary manner what was wanting, and accomplishes in a moment what ordinarily would have taken a long time; as, for instance, when God sees such a will in a soul that she was resolved to pursue the way of His love all her days, though they should last many years.

Still, all should enter the way.

But however lengthy the way to perfection, the undertaking itself is so noble and the end so divine, that the soul cannot begin too soon, nor take too much pains to reach it. Even the desire and pursuit of it brings immense blessings and puts the soul in a secure way, even though she should never perfectly attain to it in this life. Indeed there is no one, however old and overgrown with evil habits, who may not attempt it; and let him be assured that at least after death he will reap the fruit and obtain the reward of contemplatives. Enough to be in the way and to correspond with grace; then, in whatever degree of prayer death finds him, he will know that it is in accordance with God's will, and he will be happy. But if, despairing of perfection, he should desist from his efforts, contenting himself with outward observances, let him know that he will be accounted before God as having been unfaithful to the obligation of his profession. Indeed, the soul, being a pure spirit, is always active, always doing or desiring something; so that if her aspirations and operations are not directed to the right end, they will turn to a wrong one, and if she does not continually strive to get out of the natural man, she will plunge deeper and deeper into it.

Another motive to encourage the beginner to a strong

resolution is the saying of the wise man: '*He that sets himself to serve the Lord*'—especially in the way of contemplation — '*must prepare his soul for temptation.*' Temptation, indeed, he must suffer such as he has no conception of, from within as well as from without. For an internal life is not only hidden from the world, but is directly opposed to the natural man. It is even different from the notion which ordinary Christians, and even many religious, entertain. They too often regard only the outward display, as the solemn recitation of the Office, exterior observances, mortifications, and have little thought for the interior disposition and inward perfection. Hence persecutions have attended those whom God raised up to revive the true spirit of religion—alas! too much decayed and too little known in many religious communities in these days. True religious spirit teaches a just esteem and careful performance of such duties, but at the same time to place perfection in the exercises of the spirit and to value observances only in so far as they increase perfection in the spirit. For it is certain that if they are pursued for themselves alone, or as parts of real perfection, and not chiefly as helps to interior devotion, they will become a hindrance to contemplation. They will serve to nourish pride and contempt of others, and will be the ruin of true charity. Examples of such persecutions are many and well known, as may be seen in the sufferings of Thauler, Suso, St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, and others.

Further motives to a strong resolution.

Moreover, the lives of those whom God calls to the exercise of internal ways are so different from the ordinary Christian (because they withdraw themselves from unnecessary business, idle correspondence, or unprofitable friendships) that their very presence is unacceptable to their neighbours, as if they silently condemned their liberties. Hence these neighbours are apt to spread evil reports, and to call them visionaries, pretenders to extraordinary

illuminations, or persons who walk in 'wonders above themselves.'

These and many other calumnies the soul who purely seeks God must expect and be prepared to face. Let her remember that they come not by chance, but are sent for her good by the wise and merciful providence of God. They are intended to exercise her courage, and to give her an opportunity of testifying to her love of God and spiritual things. Let her not be affrighted, then, but pursue internal ways the more vigorously, knowing that there is no better proof of their excellence than that they are displeasing to worldly, ignorant men, inexperienced in internal ways. Let her not with passion condemn those opposed to her, for many may have a good intention, and are moved by zeal, though not by zeal according to knowledge. Let her attend to God, following His Divine inspirations, and she will find that God will give her light and courage, and a sense of much inward security in the pursuit of her way.

But her greatest trials will arise from her own corrupt nature and vicious habits. They will assault her with temptations, inward bitterness, agonies sharper than anything she anticipated. And no wonder, for her aim and incessant efforts are directed to raise herself out of and above the natural man, and to thwart her nature in all its idle pleasures and vain interests. So she must expect that her inferior nature in turn will continually strive against the spirit. Moreover, it will be aided by the malice of the devil, who will employ his skill to disturb an undertaking so destructive of his kingdom in the souls of worldly men. She must, therefore, make a strong resolution to bear all with quietness; to distrust herself; to rely on God alone; to seek Him by prayer; and assuredly all will be well. She will find the yoke of Christ at first burdensome, but, borne with constancy, it will become easy and delightful. Though she should be unable to subdue altogether the

resistance of her evil inclinations, still, as long as she makes a sincere effort to do so, they will be unable to hinder her happiness.

A third and even more pressing motive to a courageous pursuit of internal ways is the extreme danger and misery of a negligent tepid life, whether in religion or in the world. It not only renders perfection impossible, but endangers the very root of essential sanctity, and destroys all hope of eternal happiness, as Harphius, among other mystic writers, shows. The danger of tepidity.

Tepid souls imagine themselves, foolishly enough, to be secure from the danger of hell, because they abstain out of a servile fear from falling habitually into acknowledged mortal sins. Yet they perform their duties to God and to their brethren sleepily and heartlessly, often contenting themselves with merely exterior ones. Meanwhile they remain full of self-love, pride, sensual desires, and aversion to conversing interiorly with God. The principal reason of this tepidity is the want of love for spiritual things, and a deliberate affection for venial sins, not as sins, but as objects that are agreeable; carelessness in avoiding the occasion of them, and a determination to do no more in God's service than they think is necessary to escape hell.

Such persons, if they belong to the religious state, must pass very uncomfortable, discontented lives. Cut off from the pleasures of the world, they still entertain a strong affection for them. They must discharge their duties, perform austerities, bear the crosses incidental to the religious state, and all with little comfort or spiritual benefit, only seeking to get them over with as little trouble as possible. What a resemblance to hell is such a religious life! They cannot enjoy what they principally desire, and they are forced continually to do and suffer many things most opposed to their inclination. The miseries of a tepid religious.

If souls would at once give themselves wholly to God,

would with prudent fervour combat against their corrupt nature, and faithfully pursue their internal exercises, they would find that all things would co-operate not only to their eternal good, but even to their present happiness. They would even find pleasure in their mortifications and crosses by considering the love with which God sends them, and the great benefit they will reap from them. What comfort can be greater than to become the true inward friend of God, chained to Him with a love whose like was never known between two mortals? to know and even feel that we belong to God, and that God continually watches over us and is careful of our salvation? None of these consolations can tepid souls hope to taste; on the contrary, they are continually tormented, not only by present discontent, but still more by a fear of the uncertainty of their future lot beyond the grave.

They are an evil in a community.

To these miseries of a tepid life this also may be added, that, by their evil example, by misspending their time in idle worldly conversations, and by discountenancing those who fervently pursue internal ways, they infect their companions with their poison, and treacherously defraud Almighty God of the affections of others also. So that a tepid religious is often more harmful in a community than one who openly leads a scandalous life. For anyone taking the least care of himself will be on his guard against such a one, whereas the tepid religious imperceptibly instils into others the poison with which he is infected.

For these reasons it is evident how necessary it is to be firmly resolved never to be daunted by discouragements, but to persevere with fervour in the exercises and duties of an interior life, at whatever cost, or labour, or suffering. The soul should account tepidity or spiritual sloth as the bane of her enterprise, to which if she yield, be it ever so little, it will gather new force, and at last grow to be irresistible.

At the same time she must bear in mind that her courage and fervour must be exercised not impetuously, or from impulses such as a fit of sensible devotion will produce, but they should be seated chiefly in the superior will and regulated by spiritual discretion, according to her measure of strength and grace; for it may be as mischievous to outrun grace as to neglect to correspond with it. Indeed, it often happens that well-meaning souls, pushed on by an indiscreet emotional zeal, or advised by inexperienced directors, undertake unnecessarily severe mortifications or excessive devotional tasks; then, strength to continue failing, they become incapable of doing anything at all. We should content ourselves with such a pace as may last, and that will suffice.

CHAPTER VI

THE PARABLE OF A PILGRIM

For a confirmation of what has been said regarding the nature of the contemplative life in general, the dignity of its end, the difficulties to be encountered, the absolute necessity of courage to persevere and press forward at whatever cost, I will add the substance of a chapter from the *Scala Perfectionis* of that eminent contemplative, Walter Hilton, an Augustinian Canon. Under the parable of a devout pilgrim travelling to Jerusalem, he gives instructions very suitable to the way of the contemplative life.

'There was a certain man,' said he, 'who had a great wish to go to Jerusalem, and as he knew not the way, he addressed himself to one whom he thought would direct him, and asked him if there was a passable way thither. The other answered that the way was long and full of difficulties; that there were many ways which seemed to promise to lead thither, but the dangers of them were too great. However, there was one way he knew which, if diligently followed according to the directions he would give, would certainly bring him ultimately to his destination, though not perhaps without many frights, beatings, and other ill-usage, and temptations of every kind; but if he would only have courage and patience enough to bear

them all without quarrelling or troubling himself, but would pass on, keeping these words only in his mind and sometimes on his tongue: "I have nought, I am nought, I desire nought but to be at Jerusalem." "My life for thine," quoth he; "thou shalt escape safe with thy life, and in a competent time arrive thither."

'The pilgrim, overjoyed with this news, answered: "So I may have my life safe, and may at last come to the place that I above all things desire, I care not what things I suffer in the way. Therefore let me know only what course I am to take, and, God willing, I will not fail to observe carefully your directions." The guide replied: "Since thou hast so good a will, though I myself was never so happy as to be in Jerusalem, notwithstanding be confident that, if thou wilt follow my instructions, thou shalt come safe to thy journey's end."

'Now, my advice to thee in brief is this: "Before thou set the first step into the highway that leads thither, thou must be firmly grounded in the true Catholic faith; moreover, whatever sins thou findest in thy conscience, thou must seek to purge away by hearty sorrow and absolution according to the laws of the Church. This being done, begin thy journey in God's name; but be sure to go furnished with two necessary staffs, humility and charity, both which are contained in the forementioned speech, which must be always ready in thy mind: "I am nought, I have nought, I desire nought but only one thing, and that is our Lord Jesus, and to be with Him in peace in Jerusalem." The meaning and virtue of these words thou must have continually at least in thy thoughts. Humility says: "I am nought, I have nought;" Love adds: "I desire nought but Jesus." These two companions thou must never depart from; nor will they willingly be separated from one another, for they accord very lovingly together. And the deeper thou groundest thyself in humility, the

higher thou raisest thyself in charity, for the more thou seest and feelest thyself to be nothing, with the more fervent love wilt thou desire Jesus, that by Him, who is all, thou mayest become something.

'Now, this humility is to be exercised not so much in considering thy own self, thy sinfulness and misery—though to do this at first is profitable—but rather in the quiet contemplation of the infinite endless being of Jesus. And this beholding of Jesus must be done through grace in a sweet feeling knowledge of Him, or at least in a full firm faith in Him. And when thou dost attain to such a contemplation of Him, it will work in thy mind a far more pure, solid, perfect humility than the former way of beholding thyself. By this thou wilt see and feel thyself to be not only the most wretched, filthy creature in the world, but also in the very substance of thy soul, quite apart from its sinfulness, to be a mere nothing. And till thou hast the love of Jesus, yea, and feelest that thou hast His love, although thou hast done to thy seeming never so many good deeds both outward and inward, yet in truth thou hast done nothing at all, for nothing will abide in thy soul or fill it but the love of Jesus. Therefore cast all other things behind thee, and forget them, that thou mayest have that which is best of all; and thus doing, thou wilt become a true pilgrim that leaves behind him houses, wife, children, friends, and goods, and makes himself poor and bare of all things, that he may go on his journey lightly and merrily without hindrance.

'Well, now thou art on thy way travelling towards Jerusalem. And the travelling consists in working inwardly, and, when need be, outwardly too, such works as are suitable to thy state and condition, and such as will help to increase in thee this gracious desire that thou hast to love Jesus only. Let thy works be what they will, thinking, preaching, reading, or labouring; if thou findest that they

draw thy mind from worldly vanity, and confirm thy heart and will more to the love of Jesus, it is good and profitable for thee to use them. And if thou findest that through custom such works do in time lose their savour and virtue to increase this love, and that it seems to thee that thou findest more grace and spiritual profit in some other, take these other and leave the former ; for though the inclination and desire of thy heart to Jesus must ever be unchangeable, nevertheless thy spiritual works thou shalt use after the manner of thy praying and reading, to the end to feed and strengthen this desire ; so thou dost well to change them according as thou findest thyself disposed by grace in the applying of thy heart. Bind not thyself, therefore, unchangeably to voluntary customs, for that will hinder the freedom of thy heart to love Jesus, if grace should specially visit thee.

'Before thou hast made many steps in the way, thou must expect a world of enemies of several kinds, that will beset thee round about and endeavour busily to hinder thee from going forward ; yea, and if they can by any means, they will, either by persuasions, flatteries, or violence, force thee to return home again to those vanities thou hast forsaken. For there is nothing grieves them so much as to see a resolute desire in thy heart to love Jesus, and to travail for Him. Therefore they will all conspire to put out of thy heart that good desire and love in which all virtues are comprised.

'Thy first enemies that will assault thee will be fleshly desires and vain fears of thy corrupt heart, and with these there will join unclean spirits, that with sights and temptations will seek to allure thy heart to them, and to draw it from Jesus. But whatsoever they say, believe them not, but betake thyself to thy only secure remedy, answering ever thus : "I am nought, I have nought, and I desire

nought but only the love of Jesus"; and so hold forth on thy way desiring Jesus only.

'If they endeavour to put dreads and scruples into thy mind, and would make thee believe that thou hast not done penance enough, but that some sins remain in thy heart not yet confessed, or not sufficiently confessed and absolved; and that, therefore, thou must needs return home and do penance better, before thou hast the boldness to go to Jesus; believe them not, for thou art sufficiently acquitted of thy sins, and there is no need at all that thou shouldst stay to ransack thy conscience, for this will now but harm thee, and either put thee quite out of thy way, or at least unprofitably delay thee from travelling in it.

'If they should tell thee thou art not worthy to have the love of Jesus, and therefore that thou oughtest not to be so presumptuous as to desire and seek after Him, believe them not, but go on, and say, "It is not because I am worthy, but because I am unworthy, that I desire to have the love of Jesus; for if I once had it it would make me worthy: I will, therefore, never cease desiring it till I have obtained it. For it only was I created; therefore say and do what you will, I will desire it continually; I will never cease to pray for it, and so doing I hope to obtain it."

'If thou meetest any that seem friends unto thee, and that in kindness would stop thy progress by entertaining thee, and seek to draw thee to sensual mirth by vain discourses and carnal solaces, whereby thou wilt be in danger to forget thy pilgrimage, give a deaf ear to them; answer them not; think only on this: that thou wouldst fain be at Jerusalem. And if they proffer thee gifts and preferments, heed them not, but think ever on Jerusalem.

'And if men despise thee, or lay any false calumnies to thy charge, giving thee ill names; if they go about to defraud thee, or rob thee; yea, if they beat thee, and use thee despitefully and cruelly, for thy life contend not with

them, strive not against them, nor be angry with them, but content thyself with the harm received and go on quietly as if nought were done, that thou take no further harm. Think only on this, that to be at Jerusalem deserves to be purchased with all this ill-usage or even more, and that there thou wilt be sufficiently repaired for all thy losses and recompensed for all thy ill-usage by the way.

'If thy enemies see that thou growest courageous and bold, and that thou wilt neither be seduced by flatteries nor disheartened by the pains and troubles of thy journey, but rather well contented with them, then they will begin to be afraid of thee; yet for all that they will never cease pursuing thee. They will follow thee all along the way, watching all advantages against thee; and ever and anon they will set upon thee, seeking either with flatteries or frights to stop thee and drive thee back if they can. But fear them not, hold on thy way, and have nothing in thy mind but Jerusalem and Jesus, whom thou wilt find at thy journey's end.

'If thy desire of Jesus still continues and grows more strong, so that it makes thee go on thy ways courageously, they will then tell thee that it may very well happen that thou wilt fall into bodily sickness, and perhaps such a sickness as will bring strange fancies into thy mind and melancholic apprehensions. Or perhaps thou wilt fall into great want, and no man will offer to help thee, by occasions of which misfortunes thou wilt be grievously tempted by thy ghostly enemies, which will then insult over thee, and tell thee that thy folly and proud presumption have brought thee to this miserable pass; that thou neither canst help thyself, nor will any man help thee, but rather hinder those who would. And all this they will do to the end to increase thy melancholic and unquiet apprehensions, or to provoke thee to anger or malice against thy Christian brethren, or to murmur against Jesus, who perhaps for thy trial seems

to hide His face from thee. But still neglect all their suggestions as though thou heardest them not. Be angry with nobody but thyself. And as for all thy diseases, poverty, and whatsoever other sufferings—for who can reckon all that may befall thee?—take Jesus in thy mind, think on the lesson that thou art taught, and say, "I am nought, I have nought, I care for nought in the world, and I desire nought but the love of Jesus, that I may see Him in peace in Jerusalem."

'But if it should happen sometimes, as likely it will, that through some of these temptations and thy own frailty, thou stumble and perhaps fall down, and get some harm thereby, or that thou for some time be turned a little out of the way, as soon as possibly may be, come again to thyself, and get up again and return into the right way, using such remedies for thy hurt as the Church ordains. And do not trouble thyself overmuch or long with thinking unquietly on thy past misfortune and pain; abide not in such thoughts, for that will do thee more harm, and give advantage to thy enemies. Therefore make haste to go on in thy travail, and work again, as if nothing had happened. Keep but *Jesus* in thy mind, and desire to gain His love, and nothing shall be able to hurt thee.

'At last, when thy enemies perceive that thy will to Jesus is so strong that thou wilt not spare, neither for poverty nor mischief, for sickness nor fancies, for doubts nor fears, for life nor death, no, nor for sins neither, but ever forth thou wilt go on with that one thing of seeking the love of Jesus, and with nothing else; and that thou despisest and scarce markest anything that they say to the contrary, but holdest on in thy praying and other spiritual works, yet always with discretion and submission; then they will grow even enraged, and will spare no manner of cruel usage. Then they will come closer to thee than ever before, and betake themselves to their last and most

dangerous assault. They will bring into the sight of thy mind all thy good deeds and virtues, showing thee that all men praise and love thee, and bear thee great veneration for thy sanctity. And all this they do to the end to raise vain joy and pride in thy heart. But if thou tenderest thy life, thou wilt hold all this flattery and falsehood to be a deadly poison to thy soul, mingled with honey; therefore, away with it; cast it away from thee, saying thou wilt have none of it, but wouldst be at Jerusalem.

'And to the end to put thyself out of danger and reach of all such temptations, suffer not thy thoughts willingly to run about the world, but draw them all inwards, fixing them upon one only thing, which is *Jesus;* set thyself to think only on Him, to know Him, to love Him; and after thou hast for a good time brought thyself to do thus, then whatsoever thou seest or feelest inwardly that is not He, will be unwelcome and painful to thee, because it will stand in thy way to the seeing and seeking Him whom thou only desirest.

'But yet if there be any work or outward business which thou art obliged to do, or that charity or present necessity requires of thee, either concerning thyself or thy Christian brethren, fail not to do it; despatch it as well and as soon as thou canst, and let it not tarry long in thy thoughts, for it will but hinder thee in thy principal business. But if it be any other matter of no necessity, or that concerns thee not in particular, trouble not thyself nor distract thy thoughts about it, but rid it quickly out of thy heart, saying still thus: "I am nought, I can do nought, I have nought, and nought do I desire but only *Jesus* and His love."

'Thou wilt be forced, as all other pilgrims are, to take ofttimes by the way refreshments, meats, drink, sleep, yea, and sometimes innocent recreations; in all which things use discretion, and take heed of foolish scrupulosity about them. Fear not that they will be of much hindrance to

thee, for though they seem to stay thee for a while, they will further thee, and give thee strength to walk on more courageously for a good long time after.

'To conclude, remember that thy principal aim, and, indeed, only business, is to knit thy thoughts to the desire of *Jesus:* to strengthen this desire daily by prayer and other spiritual workings, to the end that it may never go out of thy heart. And whatsoever thou findest proper to increase that desire, be it praying or reading, speaking or being silent, travailing or reposing, make use of it for the time, as long as thy soul finds savour in it, and as long as it increases this desire of having or enjoying nothing but the love of Jesus, and the blessed sight of Jesus, in true peace in Jerusalem. And be assured that this good desire thus cherished and continually increased will bring thee safe unto the end of thy pilgrimage.'

CHAPTER VII

TWO INTERNAL GUIDES IN ALL CHRISTIANS

A guide needed.

HAVING treated of the contemplative life in general, its nature and end, and the necessary dispositions required for it, it behoves us next to consider the guide we should follow. A guide we must have, for in the present state of our corrupt nature, we have no light to enable us to walk in paths so much above and contrary to our natural inclinations, nor even light enough to discover that there is such a path at all.

Two internal guides.

Experience teaches us that in good Christians there are two internal lights or teachers, namely, the spirit of corrupt nature, and the Divine Spirit. Both offer themselves in our deliberate actions, and even strive with one another for the mastery over us. Each seeks to lead us into a path and to an end contrary to the other. The natural spirit, on the one hand, teaches us to gratify our sensual desires or worldly aims, which are most hurtful to the soul. The Spirit of God, on the other hand, discovers to us the folly and danger of following such a guide. It teaches us that our happiness consists in renouncing it; in turning into paths leading in a contrary direction; in abandoning sensible pleasures and our own convenience, in so far as they are a hindrance, or rather, not an aid, to the knowledge of God and spiritual things. For this must

be the object of our desires and efforts, whereby alone we can arrive at eternal happiness and union with God.

These two spirits are the only guides we have within us; by both are good Christians attended. What is not the teaching of the Divine Spirit is the suggestion of the false teacher. The latter took possession of the souls of men, when Adam transgressed by turning a deaf ear to the teaching of God's Holy Spirit, the only internal teacher at that time. From Adam this false light is communicated to his children, so that naturally we have no other light. But the new heavenly teacher, the Holy Spirit, is freely bestowed on us by the Divine Word and the Sacraments. It is a new divine principle imprinted on our spirit, raising it to God, and continually soliciting us to walk in His ways.

By mortal sin the Divine light is extinguished in the soul, but grace, unhappily, is never able wholly to extinguish or silence the voice of the false teacher. The latter remains even in the perfect, who are ever only too prone to listen to it. As for the less perfect, though they follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit in matters of moment, still on other occasions they are led, for the most part, by their corrupt nature. By it they incur defects which, though venial, obscure in a great measure the Divine light and weaken its efficacy. Even when imperfect souls follow the guidance of God's Spirit as regards the substance and essentials of their actions, yet by mixing with it earthly aims and interests suggested by the false teacher, they diminish much its lustre, beauty, and value. Indeed, so subtle is the natural spirit that often its suggestions are taken for Divine inspirations; and seldom it fails to insinuate its poison either into the beginning or the continuation of our best actions.

Divine inspirations our guide.

From these unquestionable truths it follows evidently that, in all good actions—especially in the internal ways of the spirit which lead to contemplation and perfection—

God is our only master and guide. Creatures, when He is pleased to use them, are only His instruments. So that all other teachers, the light of reason, external directors, or rules prescribed in books, are to be followed only in so far as they are conformable to the internal directions of God's Holy Spirit, or as God invites and moves us to have recourse to them to discover His will and to enable us to follow it. If we use them otherwise they will certainly mislead us.

This truth is acknowledged by all mystic writers to be so fundamental, that if we do not accept it and work according to it, it is idle to attempt an internal contemplative life. So that to say—as is too commonly said—Take your instructions from external teachers or from books, is as much as to say, Have nothing to do with the ways of contemplation. They can be taught only by God or those whom God specially instructs and appoints for the soul's immediate needs. It is God only who internally teaches both the teacher and his disciple; His inspirations are the only lesson and guide for both. All our light, therefore, is from the Divine illumination, and our strength is from the operation of the Holy Ghost acting on our will and affections.

In order that this important truth may be more distinctly stated and firmly impressed on the minds of God's scholars in the internal ways of His love, they should note that the inspirations here spoken of are of the same nature as the Divine light or grace by which good Christians in the world are led. With this difference, however: they extend much further, and reach to objects and acts which are uninfluenced in those who are aiming even at perfection by the exercises of an active life.

The light and virtue of ordinary grace afford, generally, to all good Christians such internal illuminations and impulses as are sufficient to enable them to resist sinful

temptations, and to perform acts of virtue which are of obligation, though this guidance is often obeyed with many accidental defects. Moreover, their actions are pleasing to God in so far only as they proceed from His grace or internal inspiration. As for actions, which are not of obligation, but which might be made to conduce materially towards their sanctification—such as what are called indifferent actions—they lack both the light and the strength to make the best use of them, or at least but seldom do so. And this, because they lead distracted lives and keep insufficient solitude and recollection to receive such exceptional light and grace. Then, as to those who pursue active exercises. They certainly attain a greater measure of light and grace than the former. They do their necessary duties more perfectly and with a purer intention, and derive greater spiritual profit from indifferent actions and occurrences. Still these also, from want of habitual recollection of mind and introversion, lose much of the fruit of many of their ordinary actions.

But as for contemplative souls, who have made sufficient progress, they receive grace as the former, but in a more sublime degree and way, so as to purify their actions from a multitude of secret impurities and aims of their corrupt nature. Moreover, they walk in a supernatural light, and are guided by inspirations, even in their ordinary indifferent actions. Thus they clearly see how they should act so as to accomplish the will of God, and grow in the divine love. This light is communicated to them by virtue of their almost continual recollection and attention to God in spirit.

The things subject to inspirations.

Thus by this light an interior soul may be directed: (1) in the manner and circumstances under which a virtue may be best exercised. For as regards the substance of a virtue and the circumstances in which it cannot, without mortal sin, be omitted, the light of ordinary sanctifying

grace will suffice. (2) In the manner, duration, change, and other circumstances of internal prayer. (3) In actions or omissions, which considered absolutely by the light of ordinary grace seem indifferent. Thus reading, the study of this or that matter, walking, conversing, staying in or leaving one's room, taking a journey, undertaking or refusing an employment, accepting or refusing an invitation, are all examples where uncertainty may arise. On such occasions souls disposing themselves by solitude and recollection are sure to receive a supernatural light or impulse to enable them to choose what will be best for their souls and most in accordance with the Divine Will. Whereas, without this light, souls generally are moved by an obscure light and natural impulse tending to natural ends and interests, with but little spiritual benefit, and often resulting in much dissipation and distraction.

Inspirations in contemplatives tend towards not doing.

Generally, when a question arises whether to omit or perform an external work, the Divine impulse, in contemplative souls, inclines towards not doing; because abstention from external work and increase of internal solitude are more suitable to their state and to that abstraction of life at which they aim. An exception, however, may be made when the performance will afford a salutary mortification to self-love or other inordinate affections of our corrupt nature.

Instances where the Divine impulse or invitation usually suggests omission are the following, among others: (1) To avoid unnecessary correspondence and conversation. (2) To be wary and sparing in the use of the tongue. (3) Not to avoid anxiously occasions of mortification or affliction. (4) To avoid encumbering ourselves with business which does not concern us. (5) To fly from honours, offices, or care over others. (6) Not to crave the possession of unnecessary things. (7) Not to question or expostulate (except it be a duty) why such a thing was said or done,

but to hold one's peace. (8) Not to complain or accuse another. (9) In cases of bearable and unharmful oppression to abstain from appeals to higher superiors. (10) To avoid voluntarily procuring a change in our condition or employment. (11) To quiet passions rising in the heart, and preserve the soul in peace and cheerfulness in God's service. (12) To avoid such things as will cause distracting or dissipating thoughts. (13) To shun particular friendships. (14) To preserve a reasonable liberty of spirit, and to abstain from burdening ourselves with assumed tasks and obligations: by becoming obligatory they may hinder us from better things. (15) In a word, Divine inspirations ever tend to produce simplicity in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to lead us to a more perfect exercise of obedience, humility, resignation, purity of intention, and purity of prayer. Whatever is contrary to these is to be rejected as a suggestion of the devil.

Concerning extraordinary illuminations.

As to extraordinary supernatural inspirations, illuminations, apparitions, voices, messages from heaven, a spiritual interior soul is forbidden to seek or desire them. She should rather pray against them, lest they should foster vanity and pride. Moreover, she should never admit them as real, nor still more put into execution commands received in this way, till they have been examined and approved by superiors. But of this more fully hereafter.

The Divine inspirations or impulses of which we here speak are either such as are communicated (1) immediately to the soul, or (2) through the medium of some other person or thing, as by an external director, or a pious book. We will speak now of the latter way, as being the easier and the one in which imperfect souls are usually first instructed.

CHAPTER VIII

AN EXTERNAL DIRECTOR

When a director is necessary.

THE soul that enters the contemplative state, or withdraws from the distractions of the world to aspire to perfection, will ordinarily at first stand in need of an external director. For although such souls have sufficient internal light to direct them in the ordinary duties of a Christian life, yet as to the practices proper to internal ways, and the regulation of ordinary actions in a manner conducive to contemplation, they are *penitus animales*, governed by sense and the obscure light of natural reason. They scarcely know what are inspirations, and how incapable they are of distinguishing or corresponding with them. For this reason their natural light and common sense tell them that they are unfit to be their own director in a new unknown state, and will lead them to have recourse to other guides. Still, even this submission of themselves to directors should not be esteemed a merely natural instinctive act. It is more the result of the inspirations and supernatural light which attend the actions of good Christians. Moreover, they know not yet how to dispose themselves for the reception of supernatural light from God; still less can they merit it. Grace, therefore, directs them to use the mediation of others, and to hear and obey God speaking through them.

But the necessity of a director is generally only at the

beginning. After souls have been equipped with general instructions, have made reasonable progress, and have learnt how to seek more light from God, they must not out of levity, or a foolish desire to manifest their interior to others, continue to seek instructions from without. Nothing will excuse them but the want of light in a particular doubtful case, and even then their step must be the result of an inspiration or impulse to seek a solution from others. Thus, they are still obeying their internal Master, who speaks to them by the external director appointed by Himself. Further excellent instructions are to be found in the *Ladder of Perfection* (part ii., chapter xci.).

Conditions required in a good director.

To enable the soul to make a good choice, it will be convenient to give the qualities of a good director. And by director is here meant not simply a confessor who hears confessions, for ordinary knowledge and prudence will suffice for that. But by spiritual director is meant one who can instruct the pentitent in the peculiar duties of an internal life; who can judge of his propensity and fitness for contemplative ways; who can teach him how to find a method or degree of prayer suitable to him; who knows the degrees of internal prayer, and can determine how long he should remain in a degree and when he should change it for a higher. He should also be able to judge what employments and circumstances are helpful, or likely to hinder his progress. And particularly he should be able to teach him how to hear and follow God's internal teaching, so that he may not stand in need of an external director. To do this effectually the director should have these qualities: (1) a good natural judgment, (2) learning, (3) experience.

As it can scarcely be expected that souls will always find an absolutely perfect director, writers discuss as to what quality is most necessary to enable a director to discharge his office efficiently. It is evident a good natural judgment

is so absolutely necessary that without it no considerable experience can be acquired; and learning when united to an unbalanced judgment will prove pernicious rather than advantageous. But a good judgment is acknowledged by all to be insufficient by itself. The question, then, lies between learning and experience—which of the two is the more necessary?

But this scarcely deserves to be questioned. For although to solve ordinary doubts and cases of conscience —as, for instance, of fasting, saying the Divine Office, restitution, and so forth—learning may be the principal quality looked for; yet, for the office of director, which is now under consideration, it is the unhesitating judgment of Gerson, Avila, St. Teresa, and others, that no trust is to be placed in learning without experience. For the director is not concerned with the former kind of difficulties, but with internal spiritual matters, with contemplation, or with attending to Divine inspirations. And it is worthy of note that the persons raised up to instruct and guide souls to the perfection of contemplative prayer have been, for the most part, of small learning, but of great experience, such as St. Anthony, St. Benedict, St. Francis, and St. Teresa.

Learning, therefore, even though it includes a knowledge of every book on the subject, will not alone make any one a competent director. Experience is necessary, and practice of the prayer to be taught. For no number of years spent in discursive prayer will qualify anyone to be a director for souls tending to contemplation, to which all enclosed religious men and women are bound.

Who are not fit guides.

Indeed, it is much safer for the soul that in solitude and abstraction aspires to contemplation to make use of her internal light, though obscure, for the application of such instructions as books which treat of affective prayer can bestow. Or she may trust herself to the guidance of a virtuous, humble-minded director who, though blessed,

perhaps, with but little learning and experience, will serve her purpose, because out of humility he will not presume to judge of things above his reach, but will doubtless encourage the soul, in case of difficulty, to seek out one more experienced than himself, or to follow the guidance of her own light. This is better than to confide in directors, however learned, who would confine her to a form of discursive prayer, with much busying of the imagination, but affording little scope to the affections, in which the good of prayer principally consists. Besides, such directors would be apt to lead the soul to view with suspicion any interior invitation to a more sublime, quiet, pure prayer in the spirit; and failing to correspond with the invitation, she might remain always in multiplicity, distraction, and unquietness. Indeed, the more learned the less suitable are such directors for souls aspiring to contemplation. For if they are ignorant of pure prayer, or unwilling to acknowledge any prayer to be more perfect than what they practise and teach to others, their learning will make them the more obstinate to keep souls in a kind of captivity, chained to methods which, though profitable for Christians in the world and beginners, are quite unsuitable for souls leading quiet, abstracted lives. Hence the directors best suited to contemplatives are those versed in the ways which they teach; and the sum of that teaching should be to abate as much as possible the activity of the imagination and extend the scope of the affections. This is all we intend here or in other passages where similar advice is given.

Actual illumination needed.

It may truly be said that these qualities taken together are not absolutely sufficient to qualify a director in all cases, but often an actual supernatural illumination is necessary. Experience, however, has great advantages over intelligence and learning. For directors with some experience in internal ways, when matters beyond their reach are submitted to them, will no doubt commit their penitents to God or to

their own discretion. And such advice is less likely to come from those whose qualifications are simply intelligence and learning, or experience in an inferior kind of prayer. But a humble person—for without humility he will be faulty, too, as Avila points out—experienced in the same interior ways as his penitent, though he may not in all cases be able to clear up a doubt, still conscious of his own deficiency, will not scorn to seek advice of others more experienced than himself.

St. Teresa, as is recorded in her life, complains much of the injury which inefficient directors did to her and will do to others. And Thauler, styled the Enlightened Doctor, declares in a sermon that, unless specially illuminated by God, he would direct the person to God Himself to be instructed in prayer. And let not such a one doubt, says he, that God will be his faithful counsellor. Moreover, he finds fault with arrogant guides who blame souls for allowing themselves to be guided by the internal light and impulses of God's Spirit, and who stigmatize them as new spirits or pretenders to extraordinary illuminations. And, continues he, they who take all their instructions from books will pursue the ways of the spirit with small success.

Thauler advises a soul pursuing perfection to seek out an experienced servant of God, though it cost her a journey of many miles. But if no such friend can be found, an ordinary confessor will suffice, however ignorant of internal ways; for the Holy Ghost speaks even by such men on account of their office. They, therefore, may safely be obeyed, even in things they do not well understand.

If a timid, scrupulous soul has to choose a director, she must avoid one afflicted with the same infirmity as herself, for the passion which blinds the penitent will blind also the director; thus the blind will lead the blind.

Laymen may be guides.

It is not necessary that the person consulted about prayer be learned or in Orders, for though laymen and women are

not allowed to preach in church, there is nothing to hinder them from giving private assistance to those who have recourse to them. Of the good results from such instructors we have many examples, as in the layman who converted Thauler, a learned doctor and religious, as also in St. Catharine of Siena and St. Teresa. Hence in well-governed convents, where a good method of internal prayer approved by Superiors and capable theologians is established, it is desirable that the instructions should come from the Superior within. Otherwise by the frequent change of directors, perhaps of quite contradictory teaching, souls may be brought to much uncertainty, and be in danger of going astray.

It is obviously more natural and reasonable that persons in the contemplative state should be guided by others of the same profession. But when recourse must be had to other guides, the selection of one pursuing the active life should be avoided. He is usually familiar with the prayer of meditation only, and often shows less zeal for the duties of prayer, solitude of spirit, and interior mortification, than for the exact observance of ceremonial or the multiplication of austerities, which of themselves have little influence on the interior life. Such observances serve principally to maintain an appearance of austerity, or to keep souls from misspending their time. Much more profitable would be a director who imposed such austerities only as are essential to an interior life, as abstraction, silence, solitude, and moderate abstinence. In other matters that are not so important it were better to leave souls a due liberty of spirit. Especially he should refrain from imposing on them any forms of mental prayer, however much liked and practised by himself. In such matters he should leave them to the guidance of God's Holy Spirit. Thus they will not be tortured with painful frequent confessions and similar unnecessary practices.

It may be objected that such directors, being strangers to the distinctive spirit of the Order or community, may endanger the loss of it. But it is difficult to understand what is meant by the much-talked-of spirit of an Order. If the profession of the Orders is to tend to contemplation, however they may differ from one another in their habit or external practices, they can have but one spirit—the spirit by which they seek God principally in His internal ways of love, through suitable methods of prayer, and the practice of such observances and mortifications as will best promote this end. And surely this good spirit a prudent director, no matter of what religious Order, will studiously endeavour to promote. Moreover, he will no doubt encourage the observance of all good regulations of the community, especially the rule of their profession. He will also instruct them to use their observance to promote their interior life and the service of God, although he may not be well informed, or interested in their particular practices.

Not injurious to the spirit of an Order.

All members of a contemplative Order are not fitted naturally for contemplation, nor for seeking God in spirit. Some are incapable of much light or of being guided by inspirations, and are therefore in need of rules to regulate at least their exterior. It is God's Will that such should depend more on external guides.

Some souls need external guides.

A spiritual director, says Thauler, ought to converse for a reasonable time with his penitents, especially at the beginning. A few brief conversations will scarcely give him sufficient insight into their dispositions and propensities to fit them with a degree of prayer proper for their needs. His principal care must be to render them independent of external guides. This may be done by giving them general directions about their prayer, teaching them especially how to dispose themselves to receive light from God, Who should be their principal guide, especially for their interior. For the application of his directions, the penitent must depend

Light must be sought from God.

on his own judgment and the help he may find in books suitable to his state and spirit. When both judgment and books fail, if the case be of moment, he may again have recourse to his director.

It is in this sense that writers who insist much on the necessity of a director are to be understood. For if the necessity were to last always, souls would have to spend all their lives conferring with directors, from which would follow endless solicitude, scruples, and dangerous distractions, most opposed to an interior life. If the soul is humbly and faithfully dependent on God, He will clear up difficulties which external masters could never reach. But it is a too common tendency for directors to make their penitents dependent upon them, to the detriment of their spiritual progress, besides other inconveniences.

Obedience necessary.

A person having recourse to a guide must deal freely and plainly with him, concealing from him nothing he should know. And the penitent must follow the directions faithfully, being confident that if he does so in simplicity of heart and in obedience to God Himself, God will guide his director so as not to mislead him.

Discernment necessary for director.

The gift of discerning spirits is so necessary for a director, that unless he can fit the soul with a degree of prayer in harmony with her natural disposition, not all the instructions of men and angels, with all the mortifications imaginable, will ever bring her to contemplation. For God seldom or never works in souls in a manner contrary to their natural character or disposition. A director must not, then, bind all souls to begin by the same method, for it is sure not to suit some. He should teach each soul how to become illuminated by God Himself through prayer and abstraction. In this way the mists of images and passions will be dispelled, and a light will spring forth in the soul far clearer and more certain than any derived from human instructions. And till souls come to the exercise of prayer

in the spirit infused by God, they are still far from contemplation.

His instructions general.

It is impossible for a director to tell at once the secret inclinations of imperfect souls, they are so widely diverse. His instructions, therefore, about prayer and attendance to Divine inspirations must be for the most part general. The soul herself must apply them by observing her own abilities and inclination, and by noting what forms of prayer and exercises suit her best. If she cannot do this reasonably, or has not courage to persevere, it is useless for her to pursue the secret interior ways of the spirit.

Frequent consultations to be discouraged.

If the soul finds herself making good progress she will have little occasion for frequent consultations. Nor should her director examine her, since he can judge well enough by her external deportment; for it is impossible that the soul can be in a wrong way without betraying signs at least to those who are themselves in a right way. There is scarcely a more certain sign that a soul is not in a right way than when she is constantly running to her director with questions and doubts, and is ever ready to manifest her interior to anyone she hears to be skilled in spiritual matters.

The distractions raised by needless consultations about the interior are particularly harmful. Distractions from without are superficial; but those hatched within by fear, scruples, curiosity, and so forth, are much more destructive of true recollection.

Two remedies.

The remedies against such difficulties are: (1) riddance, and (2) patience. The former consists in allowing some latitude in matters which are apt to perplex tender souls, as confession, the recitation of the Divine Office, obligation to the laws of the Church, and some kinds of temptation. In such matters souls should be taught to neglect and transcend scrupulous niceties, and they may be prudently liberated from customs that are not obligatory. This remedy is often effectual against scruples, disentangling the

soul from many snares which otherwise would prove a great hindrance. The other remedy, patience, is suitable in cases of aridity, desolations, and similar troubles of the interior life. In these cases the soul should be exhorted to take courage and be quietly resigned to what she cannot avoid. Above all things, she should pursue her appointed recollections in spite of opposition from the devil or her corrupt nature. The affliction is permitted by God for her good. Thus she will either repel the temptations or obtain a light to see that the way by which God leads her is the one most secure and suitable for her, as St. John of the Cross teaches in *Mount Carmel*. When she realizes this, her internal trials will become bearable and even acceptable to her. If she could but see that it is better to suffer a little bitterness from perplexities and aridities than to seek a remedy or comfort from creatures, and what consolation she might expect from her internal Master; if she would seek Him with confidence in prayer, she would save herself and her director much trouble and inconvenience.

Some souls see their way further than others, and have fewer difficulties. The director, therefore, should advise according to the character of each soul, remembering that his office is not to teach his own way of prayer, nor any definite way, but to instruct his penitents how to discover their way for themselves by observing what is profitable and what harmful. In a word, he should know that he is God's instrument, and must lead souls in God's way and not in his own.

Danger with regard to women.

Women especially should be sparing in their consultations, and, when necessity requires one, they should be brief, or many inconveniences may follow; as, for instance, (1) loss of time for both director and penitent; (2) distractions more hurtful than would result from the most burdensome employment; or (3) the danger of adding to their perplexity by not giving a full or accurate account of themselves; besides,

one difficulty will beget another, so that instead of obtaining peace they only weary their director and plunge themselves into incurable perplexities and obscurities. (4) It is to be feared, too, that these needless consultations sometimes result in dangerous familiarities and friendships, to the detriment of both director and penitent. Hence St. Francis Xavier says, 'There is seldom so much good to be expected of such frequent conferences between persons of different sexes as there is peril in them to both.'

So much for the qualities and office of a director. As to his duties with regard to scruples and mortifications, they will be indicated hereafter when we come to deal with these subjects.

CHAPTER IX

SPIRITUAL READING

Reading.

A SECOND means by which the Divine Spirit teaches souls is the reading of pious books. For spiritual profit this exercise may be esteemed next to prayer.

Reading for recreation.

As for ordinary books, such as history, science, art, and so forth, they may be permitted to contemplatives as an innocent recreation, provided that they are not made a principal end, but are sought with the view of disposing the soul to pursue afterwards with greater fervour her internal exercises. This permission is now the more reasonable because religious communities, especially of men, have almost abandoned manual labour and have substituted for it reading and study; and leading lives less abstracted than in former days, they are almost forced to comply with the times, when learning so much abounds and is so much valued.

For the soul's profit.

In reading spiritual books, interior souls should not have the intention common among those who are taken up with external things, who lead extroverted lives, and read more from idle curiosity, or to enable them to speak or preach, than for their spiritual profit. A contemplative soul will not say, 'This is a good book or a fine passage,' but, 'This is profitable for me, and, by God's help, I will apply these instructions to myself.'

For such souls the following books can be particularly recommended: *The Ladder of Perfection*, by F. Walter Hilton; the works of St. Teresa, of St. John of the Cross; also Thauler, Suso, Richard de St. Victor, Gerson, and others.* Of ancient writers there are the *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert*, Cassian's *Conferences* (specially recommended by our Holy Father), and St. Basil's Rule. For souls tending to perfection in an active life there may be recommended the works of Rodriguez on *Perfection*, St. Francis of Sales, and De Puente. Books for souls of a mixed tendency, partly contemplative partly active, are Granada and Blosius. Indeed there are few spiritual books which do not to some extent mingle matter for both in their instructions. It is advisable generally for souls in an active life not to meddle with books intended for contemplatives, but to confine themselves to those which deal with their state—the perfection of external Christian charity. All spiritual books are suitable for all souls in so far as they deal with the essential qualities and practice of virtue, but not as regards the motives, manner, circumstances, of exercising the virtues; these will vary according to the disposition and propensity of each soul. Books for contemplatives.

In reading spiritual books, it may happen that a passage occurs regarding prayer which the beginner cannot understand. Let him not worry about it or trouble others. Perhaps after more reading, or more experience, he will understand it. On obscure passages.

As for the things he understands, let him not hastily apply them to himself out of a natural liking, but let him first scan his own spirit, internal way, and God's guidance, and then make application accordingly. Otherwise, instead of reaping benefit, it may turn out that it would have been better not to have read at all, but to follow his internal light. Many souls unable to read and ignorant of methods, What to practise.

* The writings of Père Grou also deserve mention.

by seeking God in the simplicity of their hearts, and by following the invitation and impulse of the Holy Spirit, have attained to perfect contemplation.

A danger of mystic writings.

As a rule, mystic authors write according to experience in their own souls when they treat of the degrees of prayer and of the Divine action. But such is the variety of dispositions that the same course and order will scarcely serve for any two souls. Hence if imprudent readers, without sufficiently considering their own spirit and strength, shall on the authority of some book linger in an inferior degree of prayer when God calls them to a higher, or in a foolish ambition shall presume to a degree too sublime and spiritual for them, there will result endless difficulties, perplexities, and consultations.

Extraordinary practices of saints.

Of all errors the most dangerous is rashly to imitate the example of saints in extraordinary mortifications, such as fastings, watchings, and disciplines, which have been assumed by them under the guidance of God's Spirit. Such forwardness, it is to be feared, must be ascribed to pride and self-love, and will only serve to nourish these vices. And if such souls have not the courage and patience to persevere, which is only too probable, they will but impair their health, cause dejection and weariness, and end perhaps with the abandonment of a spiritual course altogether.

The benefit we should reap from extraordinary practices is to admire God's ways in the conduct of His saints, and to humble and despise ourselves for falling so far short of them in the practice of virtue; but we must not imitate them unless we have a clear light from God to do so, and have obtained leave of a prudent director. Till God gives us strength let us be content with a good will. Especially we must be careful not to entangle ourselves with obligations or vows, for it may be difficult to escape from them when we find them after trial to be inconvenient and unprofitable.

Mystic writers, in expressing the way in which they have been led, often seem to differ extremely one from another. But the difference is merely in the manner of expression. The reason of the difference is that the pure immaterial acts of the soul in prayer, especially where God alone operates, are so sublime that words and phrases cannot express them perfectly. Hence writers are forced to coin new words, or borrow images from material things to render their conceptions intelligible. Thus each devises terms and phrases to express his meaning according to his skill in the use of language. No wonder there seems to be a diversity among them. Hence the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* offers this timely warning, that much harm may come of understanding in a literal material sense what is intended to be taken spiritually.

Difference among writers.

Some spiritual writers, to impress upon us the importance of certain practices, as self-abnegation, or purity of intention, seem to require them in the utmost perfection even at the beginning. They write as though the whole of the interior life will be ruined if any defect appears in them. Doubtlessly they do this to cut off the ways of escape for our corrupt nature. But by exacting so much at the outset they only dishearten their readers, and cause them to suspect the state of their soul, being conscious of their frailty and imperfections. Thus beginners may lose heart to attempt a task which appears so disproportionate to their strength; whereas if the advice were adapted to the capacity of each soul, they would advance with courage and success.

Errors of some writers.

Reading should give place to prayer whenever the soul finds herself invited to it.

Reading yields to prayer.

Mortification may sometimes be practised with advantage in reading. When a book gives great pleasure, the soul must exercise watchfulness over herself so as not to pour herself out upon it with intemperate avidity, or yield to

Mortification in reading.

excessive curiosity. Let her now and again pause, lift up her mind to God, and afterwards continue her reading with at least a virtual attention to Him. In this way she will mortify and moderate the impetuosity of her nature. Let her specially guard against unwillingness to quit her reading to perform her recollection or other duties of obligation.

The application of instructions.

When reading we should chiefly observe our own spirit and God's invitation, and make books, instructions, or examples subservient to the spirit God has given us. Otherwise it were better not to read at all, but adhere to God alone, Who assuredly in case of need will supply all other wants and deficiencies.

The same liberty should be exercised in the application of instructions. Each should apply to himself such directions only as his spiritual director, his reason, and experience show to be suitable. Indeed, in the whole of this book there is scarcely one piece of advice which can be said to apply strictly to all contemplatives, unless perhaps this: they who aspire to perfect contemplation must not rest finally in any degree of prayer, but must follow the Divine light and invitation, and, without tying themselves to methods, they must from the lowest degree (usually meditation) ascend to the prayer of immediate affections and acts of the will, and thence to the infused prayer of aspirations.

Books not necessary.

It may be said with confidence that souls might walk in a clear, perfect light, not failing to reach in due time perfect contemplation, although there were no spiritual books and no directors. They must, however, be sufficiently instructed in the essential truths of the Catholic faith, and have a natural aptitude for an interior life. Moreover, they must pursue prayer, abstraction, and solitude according to their ability; bear patiently the mortifications God provides for them; attend to God and His invitations, interior and exterior; renounce themselves, and make Almighty God,

His Will, love and honour, their final intention in all things. All this they will accomplish if they attend to God's guidance and inspirations.

These are the two external means, directors and books, by which God teaches souls and discovers to them His Will. To these may be added the commands of Superiors, for God teaches and guides by them also. But of this more anon.

CHAPTER X

IMMEDIATE DIVINE INSPIRATIONS

How souls are principally guided.

THE third and principal means by which God directs souls in the secret paths of His Divine love, and on which depend the two former means, are the interior illuminations and inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, Who should be acknowledged the only supreme Master. It has been shown in general what are inspirations, how they are to be distinguished from natural light and the impulses of ordinary grace, and the objects about which they are principally exercised. We will now treat of them more particularly in the following order: (1) their necessity; (2) the removal of impediments to them; (3) how God communicates His light and grace; (4) that they are not hard to distinguish, and may safely be followed.

Necessity of inspirations.

With regard to the first point—their necessity. No one, I believe, disputes the necessity of Divine inspirations for the proper performance of the essential acts of Christian virtue, because these derive their merit from the Divine impulse or inspiration. But some there are who do not admit the necessity in the case of actions or omissions which are in themselves indifferent, or of less moment. But surely they are in error, as it is generally agreed by theologians, following St. Augustine and St. Thomas, that no action in given circumstances can be indifferent, because

it must have an end; and if the end is good the action must be good; if evil, the action must be evil. Hence, however indifferent an action may be when prescinded from its circumstances and the intention of the person acting, when taken in the concrete, clothed with its circumstances, directed to a particular end, the action becomes either good or bad according to the circumstances and intention. Besides, there are no actions of so little moment but that they cannot be advantageously performed from the motive of divine love, and to increase His love, especially the ordinary actions and employments of the contemplative life. Lastly, as perfect divine love cannot be attained by the exercise of charity in duties of strict obligation alone (for these seldom occur), it is necessary to utilize duties less binding, in order to multiply frequently divine love in our souls, and to purify our ordinary actions from the stains of self-love. Hence appears the necessity of the influence of the Divine Spirit even in actions not of strict obligation, if we are seriously to tend to the perfection of divine love.

Confirmed by St. Benedict's Rule.

On this head, it is worth observing how seriously our holy Father St. Benedict urges the necessity of attending to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, our supreme Master. He makes this the foundation of all religious duties in the Prologue of his Rule, where he says that we must 'never depart from the rule and government of God'; and that we must have our eyes open 'to the Divine light.' For this reason he calls a monastery the 'school in which God's service is taught,' and 'the workshop in which the art of the Divine Spirit' is taught and practised. For all things in the religious life tend to withdraw us from external teachers and influences, and to cause us to be led by God alone. Therefore our holy patriarch lays down, as the foundation of all religious practices, that all be done in virtue of prayer. His words are: '*Imprimis ut quidquid agendum*

inchoas bonum a Deo perfici instantissima oratione deposcas'—as though he would say, In the first place thou art to consider this to be the principal reason why I invite thee to lead a religious life—that thou mayest be brought to this happy state, that through earnest, assiduous prayer God may bless and perfect every act that thou shalt perform in the religious state. Now if according to our holy Father prayer ought to prepare every action, then surely it will follow that all ought to be done in reference to God, at His bidding, and for His love, honour, and glory.

Moreover, our holy Father in particular instances makes mention of Divine inspirations; as, for instance, when he ordains that prayer in common should be short (chapter xx.); he adds that any one may prolong it 'at the invitation or impulse of Divine grace.' Again, as regards abstinence and the measure of meat and drink to be allowed, he declares he has a difficulty in determining the quantity on account of the diversity of needs and dispositions; and while allowing enough for the strongest, he leaves each to be guided by the direction of grace, saying that 'everyone has his special gift of God: one has this, another that'; and 'those to whom God has bestowed strength to endure a sparing diet may be assured that by so doing God will give them a special reward.' Other passages from the Rule might be quoted to the same effect.

Our holy Father teaches as he himself was taught—by the Divine Spirit. For what teacher had he from his infancy but the light and impulse of the Holy Spirit, Who directed him into and in his solitude, and enabled him to guide all succeeding ages in the cœnobitical life? The same may be said of the ancient hermits, who could have had no director but God, and no employment during their solitude and silence other than to attend to their internal teacher and to carry out His inspirations. Hence a holy hermit in Cassian says that as by God's inspiration we make a beginning

when we enter religion, so likewise 'by the discipline, instruction, and illumination of God we attain to perfection.' Another says that a soul can do no good unless she is 'enlightened by a daily illumination from God.' These are expressions our holy Father himself uses, and, it would seem, borrowed from these authors. For this reason he is content with ordaining regulations for the exterior only, because he knew that the interior could be directed by God alone. Indeed, from his very regulations it is evidently his principal object to render souls capable of observing and following the inspirations of God's Holy Spirit, without which exterior observances will never bring us to perfection. Hence he is particular about solitude and seclusion from the business or news of the world, and enjoins almost continual silence except when we speak to God. In several places he signifies incidently that interior spiritual reformation ought to be the principal aim of a religious soul. Thus in the concluding chapter of the Rule he calls its observances a preparation to the perfection to be learned from the lives and conferences of the Fathers. He also declares with great humility and no less truth that he intended by his Rule to bring souls in some degree 'to a laudable exterior carriage and the beginning of a holy religious life.' But, said he, if any one will tend to perfection 'there are the teachings of the holy Fathers'—as if he had said, He must, according to the teaching of the holy Fathers, attend to the Divine Master by the pure sublime prayer which they practised and discovered. St. Francis also, in his Rule, gives similar advice: 'The religious brethren must attentively mark that above all things they ought to desire to have the Spirit of our Lord and His holy operation or working in their souls.'

In conclusion, it cannot be held that perfection may be attained merely by avoiding mortal sins and by doing such acts of virtue as are of strict obligation for all Christians,

Conclusion.

for to maintain it were manifestly foolish. Also it cannot be held that actions which are indifferent or not universally binding (as methods of prayer, observances, etc.) may not be sanctified by a holy intention, and help us to advance in divine love, for this is contrary to experience. Lastly, it cannot be maintained that ordinary actions can be exalted without actual internal grace (*i.e.*, Divine illuminations and impulses) to produce an effect which even necessary virtues could not produce, for to say so were a manifest impiety. It must, therefore, be held that the teaching and operation of God's Holy Spirit is the principal and necessary cause of our sanctification; that He enables us to make use of such actions to attain to perfect contemplation, and that without His aid it would be impossible of attainment. Indeed, so unsearchable are the internal dispositions of souls, that not only is it impossible to bring them under external rules, but they cannot even be clearly perceived except by Him to Whom alone our hearts and their secret inclinations are naked and transparent.

CHAPTER XI

IMPEDIMENTS TO DIVINE INSPIRATIONS

Attending to inspirations.

THE necessity of an internal Divine Teacher being established, there follows the necessity, for all who would walk in these ways, to obey Him. And as each carries in his heart a false teacher, who urges him to listen to his lessons and to neglect the Divine Teacher, the way to become a dutiful disciple of God's Holy Spirit will be: (i.) to neglect and silence the voice of our corrupt nature, and (ii.) to be attentive to the admonitions of God's Spirit.

The first impediment.

For the first there are two impediments, broadly speaking, which are put in our way by Nature, and hinder us from attending to God. The first is distracting thoughts; the second, unruly passions. The remedy against the former is to lead an abstracted life, to disengage ourselves from business which does not concern us, to mortify curiosity to learn about things not appertaining to our profession, to restrain our tongues from idle conversations, to reduce our thoughts from multiplicity to unity by fixing them continually on the divine love, which is the 'one thing necessary.' These ways, faithfully practised, will go far to banish distractions from our minds.

The second impediment.

Against the second impediment, unruly passions, the only remedies are, first, the mortification of inordinate attachment to creatures; of useless entangling friendships;

of all sensual desires; of ambition to prevail in disputes; of desire for glory or praise by writing; and especially of that most dangerous—because so intimate and spiritual—thirst for unnecessary knowledge. There must also be the mortification of anger, impatience, melancholy, fear, or scrupulosity. Secondly, we must have a care to preserve our soul in peace, tranquillity, and cheerfulness, not suffering passions to be raised in our mind, especially during our imperfect state; not even though they should be directed to good and holy objects, because they cloud and disorder the spirit. Hence we must avoid impetuosity or haste in the performance of our duties, which are best discharged with calmness, clearness of mind, and resignation. So much will suffice here, for in the following book we shall treat more fully on this subject.

Purpose of the religious state.

Indeed, for what purpose did we enter religion but to escape the impediments which hinder us from attending to God and from following His Divine Will? In this lies the difference between the secular and religious state. The secular person, on account of the distractions, solicitudes, and temptations of the world, cannot easily find time to attend to God and the acquisition of His love. He is often compelled to depend on guidance from without; his mind is taken up for the most part with thoughts more or less idle; he is often agitated with impetuous affections or full of plans and schemes, so that he cannot recollect himself sufficiently to hear God speaking to him interiorly; whereas a Religious makes it his principal business to attend to God's voice within him; for this purpose he renounces all impediments and distractions.

And if the sons of St. Benedict will cast a serious eye upon their Rule, they will surely find that as, on the one hand, it is benign in regard of outward austerities not directly helpful to the spirit, so, on the other, it is rigorous in regard of silence and solitude. It requires the renuncia-

tion of solicitude for corporal necessities, and the practice of mortifications which will check dissipation of mind, and dispose the soul for recollection and attention to God. Prayer especially, which he calls the 'work of God,'* to which all other works and observances are to give place,

* Father Baker's interpretation of the words 'work of God' (*opus Dei*) as prayer in general is contrary to the steady tradition of the Order. The tradition is that St. Benedict's 'work of God' is the Divine Office. From this and one or two other passages in Sancta Sophia some have inferred that Father Baker rather disparages the Divine Office. And it would almost seem as if some such thought was in Father Leander of St. Martin's mind when he penned these words in his *Memorial* on the writings of Father Baker: 'Particularly let the reader observe a note which is given in one of these books, and found in but few spiritual writers, yet necessary for those religious that are addicted to the choir—viz., that although the author commendeth so highly mental prayer, yet that prayer which is perfectly *mental and vocal too* is far more excellent than that which is mental only; as will be the exercise of the saints in heaven after the Day of Judgment, when in body and soul they shall praise and contemplate Almighty God. Whereupon it followeth that although in this life our frail and weak body hindereth our soul, so that our prayer cannot be so perfectly mental and vocal as it shall be in heaven, yet must our mental prayer be so practised that by the grace of God and loyal perseverance in union with Him our vocal prayer in choir may be converted into mental; that is, that our vocal saying and singing may be so lively, animated, as it were, and informed with affection of soul, as it were altogether spiritual prayer. And so shall we fulfil the words of our rule: *Nihil præponatur operi Dei* (Let nothing be preferred before the Office of the Choir).'

However, it may very well be that Father Baker wished merely to emphasize the truth that the excellence of the Divine Office does not consist in external solemnity, but in the degree of recollection with which it is said: that the external splendour of ceremonial and volume of sound is comparatively of little worth if the prayer be not also *mental;* that the end to be sought is not to make an impression on others, but to lift the minds and hearts of the brethren to God by fervent aspirations and affections. In a word, that the Divine Office should be true spiritual prayer, and not mere empty sound and outward show. But when the Divine Office is recited mentally and affectively, then (says Father Baker) a very 'sublime degree' of perfection is attained, for

is seriously and incessantly enjoined. By its exercise we transcend gross sensible images and subdue unruly passions in our hearts. It is evident, therefore, that our holy Father's principal care in the observances prescribed by him was to free his disciples from these two obstacles to an interior life, to continual attention to God and converse with Him. This may be justly called the spirit of the Rule of St. Benedict.

A third impediment.

There is another impediment to Divine inspirations which must not be omitted, especially as it is one little noticed by writers. It is this: many souls imprudently hinder and even destroy liberty of spirit, which is so essential to all who pursue interior ways. They obstinately adhere to their preconceived notions, instead of yielding themselves to the impulse of the Holy Spirit. For though their practices may be good in themselves, still with the change in their spiritual state, as in progress there must be, what was formerly according to the Divine Will and inspiration will become unsuitable and harmful to the present guidance of God.

It is essential to remove this impediment, for it is nothing less than to prescribe the ways in which God is to lead us. It is to oblige God to follow our way, and to do our will instead of our following His. Devout souls, therefore, must continually keep themselves in a state of detachment and pliability of spirit, or they will be in many cases incapable of believing or doing what God's Spirit dictates

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vocal prayer said mentally is more perfect than mental prayer alone (see book iii., c. ii.).

It may be observed that in Father Baker's time there was a great tendency to multiply offices. For example, at St. Gregory's, the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary was said daily till 1780. Elsewhere the Office of the Dead was said daily; also the Penitential and Gradual Psalms and Litanies of the Saints. Father Baker may have felt a need to counteract or restrain this tendency.

to them. It is to be feared that they will often grieve and even extinguish the Holy Spirit within them by their obstinate resistance of His impulses.

To give an example. It may have been profitable for the soul at the beginning to undertake certain devotions and vocal prayers, or to select for meditation the four last things, or make frequent examinations of conscience, and so forth. But if God should call her to higher exercises and purer prayer, and she resists the invitation because she finds her practices commended in books, or because she formerly profited by them, she will only entangle her spirit and lose time which might be spent in more profitable recollections. She will also render her spirit dull and indisposed for the prayer and practices to which she is invited by a new and clear light. In a word, she will renounce the Divine Will to follow her own; and she will hinder her progress in the ways of contemplation. She must, therefore, exert herself to recover an indifference and liberty of spirit, so that she may follow God wheresoever His inspirations invite her. And she may be confident that God will never direct her to do aught prejudicial to her duty, to obedience, to superiors, or to any other of her obligations.

This doctrine is far reaching, so far that some learned and even spiritual men may perhaps disapprove of the freedom accorded by the best mystic writers to souls in special circumstances, unless indeed these directors are themselves experienced in contemplative ways. And as for unlearned persons, they are almost in danger of taking scandal.

Examples.

Some of the ways in which liberty of spirit may be curtailed to the soul's detriment are as follows: (1) Frequent scrupulous confessions of some venial sins causing anxiety. (2) A habit of scrupulous examination of conscience. (3) Needless general confessions. (4) Forcing

sensible sorrow for sin. (5) Overburdening oneself with vocal prayers or other practices to the prejudice of daily recollections. (6) Undertaking unprofitable mortifications. (7) Practising what is read in books, though found to be unsuitable. (8) Imitating the practices of others, without a due consideration of one's own ability. (9) Obliging oneself always to meditate on the Passion. (10) Doing things merely for edification. (11) Tying oneself to exact methods of prayer and a fixed number of acts in recollections. (12) Undertaking labours and austerities without due consideration or necessity. (13) Clinging tenaciously to an internal exercise when invited to a higher. (14) Binding oneself to a fixed posture during recollections. (15) And, worst of all, entangling oneself by vow under the influence of sensible devotion, remorse, or fear. Other examples might be added of practices good in themselves, but harmful for contemplatives on account of their abstracted manner of life. For instance, they may find it prejudicial to engage in duties or offices in company or alone, by which images and solicitudes may be multiplied. Such practices, voluntarily undertaken, may so entangle souls that they are unable to observe or obey the action of the Divine Spirit within them. Thus they may remain in an imperfect state without hope of progress, unless they renounce their own judgment and self-imposed obligations.

I have thought it sufficient to speak of the impediments by which souls are hindered from attending to their Divine internal Teacher for this reason : when the impediments caused by images of creatures, by inordinate affections, or by opinions and customs, are removed, the soul, being all activity and naturally ever thinking and loving, will turn in another direction and see what she should pursue and love, viz., God. Creatures being removed and forgotten, there remains only God. Their light taken away from our

understanding, there remains no object for our will and affections but God alone.

Generally speaking, the most efficacious means for removing these impediments is abstraction, solitude, and prayer in spirit, and the aspiring to an habitual state of recollection. Besides the supplicatory value of such prayer (by which God will be moved according to His oft-repeated promise to be a light to the meek and the humble), it has a direct efficacy to procure interior illumination. For the soul then sees God and nothing else; so that it has no guide but Him to follow. Moreover, by prayer in spirit, Divine charity is firmly rooted in our hearts, and makes us insensible to all that would divert our attention or affections. Indeed, we see by experience that love of any object clears the mind, and confers greater ability to discover how the object beloved may be procured or retained than could result from much study and meditation.

CHAPTER XII

HOW GOD COMMUNICATES LIGHT AND GRACE TO INTERIOR SOULS

Principle of good actions.

THE third point for consideration in regard of inspirations is the manner God communicates His light and grace to our understanding and will.

For a clearer comprehension of this point we should consider that the fundamental grace, called in Scripture 'the gift of the Holy Ghost,' conferred in baptism, extinguished by sin, renewed by penance and prayer, increased by Holy Communion and the practice of a Christian life, whatever it may be objectively, is, for our purpose, a certain Divine principle or faculty, partaking of the nature of a permanent habit and infused into the spirit of man. By it he is enabled, through the actual concurrence of his free will, to do in all things the will of God. Its influence diffuses itself through the faculties of the soul, curing her disorders, satisfying her wants, healing the diseases caused by sin.

God's co-operation needed.

This new Divine faculty, signified, it would seem, by the prophet David when he said, '*The light of thy countenance, O Lord, is like a seal stamped on our souls*,' is not sufficient alone to produce saving effects. Just as a musician or poet, however skilful he may be, is not always actually singing or writing verses, but only when a special occasion elicits the act, as the desire of gain or praise, or to please

himself; so for the exercise of this grace there is required actual aid of God, Who by a special Divine Providence ministers occasions and impulses, exciting the will to waken the grace which otherwise would lie dormant in the soul.

Proofs of this are afforded by daily experience. A sermon, an opportune word, or an occurrence under suitable circumstances, is enough at times to lift up our soul to God in prayer, to incite us to an act of charity, to lead us to mortify an inordinate affection, or even to convert a soul to God from a sinful state well-nigh desperate. By such means we (as St. Paul exhorts Timothy) '*blow into a flame*' the grace which lay in our hearts like live coals smothered in ashes. If this be frequently done, grace, which at first is kindled only by strong efforts, becomes more easily inflamed, so that with but slight encouragement it is ready to diffuse abroad its warmth and virtue, till at length it acquires such perfect dominion over the soul that it almost entirely subdues the contrary principle of corrupt nature. In perfect souls this grace is hardly ever idle, but upon the least hint it turns the soul to God, and keeps her almost continually fixed upon Him, so that things which formerly had but little effect upon them will now move them, and violently inflame their souls with love for God.

Indeed, in some perfect souls the gift of God's Holy Spirit becomes so vigorous that it subdues reason itself, pushing the soul to heroic actions without deliberation, though the soul by consenting merits. Thus we read of some ancient martyrs who, under a Divine impulse, rushed before the persecuting judges to confess the name of Christ, the love of God burning in their hearts and constraining them, as St. Paul observes. From the same principle proceeded the gift by which primitive Christians in public meetings often uttered prayers, not of their own invention,

but, to use St. Paul's expression, God's Spirit praying in them. In this sense, principally, I suppose, the Schoolmen understand the gifts of the Spirit, although it is certain that all holy actions, internal and external, are effects of the same Spirit, though in a less degree.

This fundamental grace is the talent or coin which has God's image and not Cæsar's stamped on it, and which God bestows on every one at baptism to trade with, which, till the will co-operates with the actual aid of God, lies wrapped in a napkin and hidden in the ground; but if well traded with, multiplies into many talents. It is that small but Divine seed spoken of by the Evangelist which, cast into our hearts, produces by cultivation many and precious fruits. It is that leaven which, enclosed in the three faculties of the soul, as in three measures of meal, diffuses its virtue through the whole mass.

Prudence and charity compared.

In order more closely to grip our subject, it may be affirmed that by the constant exercise of moral virtues there is generated the moral virtue, prudence, which no speculative learning, however great, could have produced. This virtue is not concerned with general notions, but bestows skill in particular acts. It enlightens the soul to judge in what circumstances and with what qualities an act of virtue should be exercised to produce the best results. So that a person possessing it in a high degree will not omit a suitable occasion for practising a virtue, nor will he do it unseasonably, for then it would not be virtue. Nor in the exercise of it will he be deficient in qualities requisite to give it lustre. The same principle may be seen in the exercise of Divine virtue or charity. By its constant practice not only is charity itself increased, but there is likewise kindled in the soul by the Spirit of God a far clearer, more certain, far-reaching light of spiritual prudence to lead us in divine ways than is afforded by moral prudence. Moreover, moral wisdom can teach the exercise of virtue in

those occasions only—and they do not often occur—in which such virtues have to be exercised; it fails to give rules for unimportant or indifferent actions. But the Divine light, which teaches us to love God alone, accounts no action as indifferent; it can skilfully discern how one action more than another will lead to the love and service of God, and bids us choose the best and direct it to that divine end.

Illuminations: how caused.

The reason why Divine light can be kindled by charity alone, and not by study or speculative thought, is because the darkness or blindness natural to our understanding arises principally from the perversion of the will by self-love. Self-love will not suffer the understanding to see what it sees. Even when we are well instructed by faith in the rules of virtue and piety, still in many instances self-love inclines us to the side which we ought to reject. Indeed, it often prevents the understanding from noting what is evil and defective, and on the least excuse it will cast such a gloss upon the case, and will so press the understanding to find reasons for preferring the side it desires, that the very light of the understanding will mislead us. But when the perversion of the will is rectified by perfect charity, and the secret interests and designs of self-love are discovered and banished, then the mind beholds everything in a clear light, and proposing God as the end of all actions, sees where He is to be found in them, and how He may best be served and obeyed. Then the will, so far from clouding the understanding, on the contrary will alone dispel any obscurity that was there. For the upright, sanctified, fervent will alone is able to draw the soul in all its faculties from inferior objects, and to carry it in its own stream to God. It will suffer the soul to choose only what is best, because God would have that to be chosen. According, therefore, to the measure of charity, so will be our measure of light. If our charity be tepid our

light will be defective, and will show us only what must be practised under the penalty of separation from God, the object of charity. But if charity be inflamed, how great is the light it sheds abroad. Not a step taken but we see the way clearly before us, and can avoid the rough, miry, crooked places in it; and so we run apace without stumbling or delay, declining neither to the right nor to the left, but daily approaching nearer and nearer to the end of our heavenly race.

Actual and permanent light.

The Divine light in the soul is habitual and permanent, or actual and transitory. Permanent light is the virtue of spiritual discretion. Without it actions, however splendid outwardly, are of little worth, as, for example, great austerities, the solemn performance of the Office, almsgiving, and so forth. All such practices are of small profit unless they proceed from charity and tend to increase and establish it more firmly in the spirit. To make our actions perfect they must proceed from God and be directed to Him. He must be both their end and their principle. It is not sufficient for perfection, therefore, that an action be good in itself and be directed to a good end, but the Divine light should inform the soul that under the circumstances it is God's will that she should perform that determinate action, and not another which in itself may be better.

Effects of supernatural prudence.

The permanent light of supernatural discretion instructs the soul concerning her advancement in contemplation. It teaches her not culpably to neglect religious observances, and to perform them with a pure intention for her spiritual good. In mortifications it teaches her to bear necessary ones willingly, and to assume voluntary ones only under the guidance of God, bearing in mind the weakness of the flesh: by overburdening herself she will be rendered incapable of enduring mortifications even of obligation. In prayer it teaches her what degree is proper for her; how

long she is to continue without change; when God invites her to a higher degree; and when the invitation comes, to accept it readily. It teaches her how much time should be spent in prayer to make reasonable progress in it; it teaches her to suspect sensible devotion, not to glut herself with its honeyed sweetness, nor to undertake under its influence extraordinary tasks which would leave her overburdened when the fire has died out. In a word, it teaches the soul due moderation in all things—a moderation that is laudable, meritorious, and agreeable to God.

How contemplative and active souls are guided.

This light I have called permanent and habitual; but it should be noted that, as it is habitual only, it does not direct. It is, as it were, veiled over, till God by administering an occasion moves the soul to reflect and consult Him. Thereupon the light is unveiled and shines forth, and enables the soul to see how to act under the circumstances. So that it is God, or, better, the gift of His Holy Spirit (which is abundant in such souls), that is her actual director.

Everyone endowed with a good will and sincere heart is capable of guidance by light communicated by the Holy Spirit; so that to attend to it and obey it is a duty not only in the contemplative life, but in a devout active life. In the latter souls doubtlessly have a supernatural light corresponding to their state, by which they can perform their actions with much purity of intention.

However, there can be no question that the actions of contemplatives much excel in purity of intention those of active souls, because contemplatives penetrate deeper into their interior in their profound, pure, imageless recollections. By this means they discover the very roots of their intentions, and purify them from what is amiss. Besides, in accordance with their state, they are involved in fewer external distracting employments, and are better disposed to attend to their internal Teacher. They also contract

fewer blemishes, and these are more easily discerned and removed. Lastly, as they are principally engaged in internal operations, their constant care is to cleanse the fountain, the spirit itself, the seat of Divine light and grace.

Moreover, in the contemplative life the greater the proficiency the closer is the attention and obedience to Divine inspirations. To perfect souls the Divine light is almost a constant guide; they continually correspond with it, even in ordinary actions. But imperfect souls seldom receive this light and guidance, except, perhaps, at the height of their recollections; it does little to purify and supernaturalize their ordinary actions. This applies also to devout souls in the active life. They direct their actions through the day by the light still remaining in their minds from their morning recollection. As for actions for which they received no light in prayer, they are performed by the light of natural reason, or at best by the habitual light of grace by which they avoid sinful defects; their actions, too, are deficient in purity of intention, and are often mixed with natural interests. The reason of this is that their imagination and passions predominate, and push them on to perform their actions without sufficient reflection, and without consulting their internal Teacher. And if they do attach to their actions a pure intention, it is usually later, after the action has begun or been resolved upon for other motives; so that divine love becomes only an accessory motive, not the cause and principle of the action.

Advice to beginners.

The best means for imperfect souls to cleanse their ordinary actions from the impurity of natural interests is to think over the employments of the day, and to prearrange what is under their control, or is likely to take up a considerable portion of their time. At the morning recollection they may beg the Divine assistance, and resolve to perform these duties for the love of God and His glory. But they must be careful not to entangle themselves in

resolutions which would disturb their peace of mind if not faithfully kept. Finally, by sometimes reflecting quietly during the day upon the promises made at the morning's recollection, the Divine light will grow more and more familiar to them, and by degrees will extinguish the false light of nature by which they were for the most part misled.

CHAPTER XIII

HOW TO OBTAIN LIGHT IN DOUBTFUL CASES

How to obtain light.

We must now consider how the Divine light may be discerned, especially in doubtful cases, and what reliance is to be placed on it. The former question will be treated of here; the latter will be reserved for the following chapter.

It was said that imperfect souls have only a dim light, insufficient to direct them in many ordinary actions. They, too, who have attained to an habitual supernatural light find many cases to which it does not extend; even in the perfect the light will sometimes fail. Let us suppose, for instance, that the soul has a serious doubt concerning her prayer or interior life, and that she cannot find an experienced person to whom she can confidently submit her difficulty, or perhaps has no interior invitation to seek a solution from anyone: how is she to act so as to obtain more light of God? I will endeavour, as best I can, to show how she may obtain from God an actual illumination or direction; then I will indicate how the light is ordinarily conferred on interior souls.

The doubt is here supposed to be of some moment; for as to ordinary difficulties, she may in the name of God follow with a good intention her natural judgment. For it would certainly be more prejudicial to the soul to lose time and disquiet herself with an anxious examination of trifling

difficulties than if she chose what in itself was less perfect through determining quickly.

Again, there are cases which should be solved only by an exterior director or Superior. The soul here ought not to expect a solution from God, Who sends her to His representatives. Such are cases dealing with external observance, as fasting, the Divine Office, the Rule or Constitutions. The office of the internal Master is chiefly concerned with internal matters, or the omission of external things not of obligation. If the case concerns something to be done or omitted at a future time, the soul should avoid any sudden, ill-advised resolution, especially under the influence of passion or emotion, as, for instance, when she bears a sensible affection to the persons concerned. It is better to defer the decision as long as possible, so that she may have time to consider it with her natural reason, to free herself from the influence of passion, to consult God with resignation in her recollections, thereby to obtain light to discover His Holy Will. Moreover, it may happen, before action need be taken, a new circumstance may arise and alter the whole situation.

When the soul is naturally more inclined to one side of the doubt than to the other, she must try to acquire, especially in prayer, indifference and resignation in the matter. She may also prepare herself by thinking that God will declare His Will in favour of the side to which she is naturally less inclined.

In seeking to learn the Divine Will by prayer, let not the person make the doubt the subject of his recollection, or argue the matter in his prayer as if that which seemed most probable after such debating were God's Will. And this for several reasons: (1) Because our prayer, which should be pure, interior, in the spirit, will be turned into a distracting meditation on external affairs, and the mind filled with sensible images—even passions may be raised. (2) Because

we may mistake our imagination or natural inclination for the Divine light or impulse, whereas such light is almost exclusively obtained when the imagination is still and the soul in a profound recollection in spirit. (3) And, finally, because such meditation is anything but prayer, it is little more than an ordinary examination of the matter. If it is to be done, it should be despatched before prayer. Let not the soul, then, depart from the usual order and manner of her prayer. She may, however, wish secretly and briefly that God would teach her His Will concerning her difficulty.

Supernatural manifestations not to be desired.

The soul must be careful not to entertain a hope that God will manifest His Will to her in an extraordinary way, as by an angel or a revelation. Ordinarily such hopes could proceed from nothing but pride; and were God to grant her wish, it is to be feared it would only increase her pride and do her much harm.

First way of removing doubts.

There are two ways in which God ordinarily intimates His Will to His servants. The first is by clearing the understanding and infusing into it a supernatural light, through which the natural reason sees something new or something it had not rightly understood. By this light of supernatural discretion the obscurities which hindered the reason from seeing the truth are removed. These obscurities are generally caused by sensible images which have taken possession of the imagination, or by natural interests which have engaged the affections. By these reason is pushed on to form a judgment and choice before the soul has weighed maturely and impartially the circumstances, so that reason devoid of the supernatural light kindled by charity determines in favour of the side to which the imagination or passions incline her.

Utility of prayer.

No means are so effectual for liberating the soul from these impediments as pure spiritual prayer, in which the soul transcends gross images and renounces her natural inclination and interests. We may, therefore, securely rely

on the light and decision of the understanding when cleared and purified from the disturbance of the sensitive faculties and appetite. This is the best and safest light a man can have. And we must acknowledge it to be supernatural, because it illuminates us in supernatural things, discovers to us the relation between the action and our supernatural end, and extinguishes the light of carnal reason by which the things of God are not seen or are esteemed foolishness. It is to be accepted as the very light of God's Holy Spirit, a light which cannot be obtained by study, nor instilled into us by the most spiritual person in the world. Moreover, this light exceeds the efficacy of the ordinary permanent light of faith by which we see supernatural objects in a general manner only, and the means leading to them. But by this lamp kindled in our understanding by prayer and charity we clearly discern the relation and capacity of each action and circumstance to dispose us to perfect union with God by love.

If the soul has pondered over a difficulty before her recollection, and in prayer she finds herself still inclined to do what her reason or some counsellor had judged to be best, I should regard it as a Divine inspiration, not on account of the former consideration, but of the subsequent confirmation during her recollection.

A second method.

The second way by which God indicates His Will to the soul in prayer is by communicating a blind, reasonless impulse to the superior will. He communicates to the will a weight and inclination to one side without actually representing a special motive or reason to the understanding sufficient of itself to determine the will. This occurring in virtue of spiritual prayer may be confidently esteemed the work of God, since no creature can immediately move the superior will.

In this connection we may call to mind that the holy abbot Nisteron, a friend of St. Anthony, when asked what

kind of work he would advise for the good and advancement of the soul, answered: 'God only knows what is good for thee to do, therefore look what thou findest that thy soul would have thee to do according to God, and that do thou.'

Certainly, if ever God would show that he abides by His promise to grant the petitions of His children when they ask according to His Will, it would be when a humble soul, moved by spiritual necessity, begs with resignation the light of His Holy Spirit for the solution of difficulties which concern her solely in reference to His service and her advancement in His love. For when can a soul be said to ask according to God's Will more truly than when she withdraws herself from her natural interests, and fixing her eyes and heart on God alone, makes known to Him her petitions?

The faculties acted upon.

The illumination referred to in an earlier part of this chapter is not supposed to be in the imagination, but solely in the understanding; the impulse or inclination also must be in the spiritual will, and not in the sensitive appetite, otherwise it would not be deserving of so much confidence. The imagination is so irregular and inconstant, and the sensible impulses which stir the feelings are so disorderly, that they are justly to be suspected. For although in the fervour of sensible devotion the emotional, sensitive nature is carried towards God, still, the superior part of the soul, not being in a state of tranquillity, is little capable of Divine illumination or Divine influence. Hence the inclination and resolutions formed at such a time are not much to be relied upon.

In case of no results.

If after these efforts to discover the Divine Will it should happen that the soul is still without sufficient light or inclination towards one side of the question, according to Thauler's opinion she may confidently make choice of either side. She may then believe her decision to be

according to God's Will, for she has done her part in the matter. And after all is not this the end she had in view, and for which she maintained an attitude of indifference and resignation?

Nevertheless, in making choice under such circumstances she will do well to weigh the following suggestions: (1) Generally speaking, when two courses seem about equal it is safer to choose the side which presents the greater mortification. (2) It is better to make choice of not-doing than of doing, especially if the action is likely to cause distractions or solicitude. Abstraction, generally, is more suitable to the contemplative state and the spirit of our Order, which tends to perfection by detachment, silence, and solitude. (3) Let the soul choose the side which will be most approved of by devout friends. (4) Let her follow the example of one whose opinion she values, when it concerns others as well as herself—for instance, in the election of Superiors. (5) If the business concerns her own good only, she is not obliged always to choose what is in itself the more perfect; she should consider her present state and the probable effects of the choice on her future. For example, to keep herself always in the Divine presence, to be in a constant state of recollection, or to renounce all natural satisfaction, are matters certainly of great perfection, and they are all things to which she is bound to tend. But if an imperfect soul were to attempt them, she would ruin her mind and health, and in a short time would be incapable of any good. For her, then, what is in itself less perfect must be esteemed more perfect, viz., a fervent but moderate exercise of prayer and mortification. Thus she will gain ground little by little, and at last be able to do what will be perfect both in itself and for her.

A firm resolution recommended.

After making her choice the soul is advised by Michael Constantiensis, a devout prior of the Carthusians, to persevere in it, even though someone afterwards should make what

appears to be a better suggestion, just as a soul having deliberately chosen a director is not to heed advice contrary to his direction. And surely, he continues, the soul is under a stronger obligation to follow the interior counsel of God, sought by resigned, persevering prayer, to which He has attached an express promise: '*Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, believe that you shall receive, and it shall happen to you.*' Such was the practice of Blessed Angela of Foligno and others.

In the life of Blessed Angela it is recorded that God commanded her to set down (the only occasion on which she received such instructions) these striking words, that He would take away His light and grace from those who, brought into immediate contact with their Divine Master, should be so ungrateful as to forsake Him for an external guide. Moreover, that such would have a curse from Him if they persisted in withdrawing themselves from His guidance to follow the directions of man.

The advice of constancy to our resolution does not, however, apply in certain cases: (1) Where a Superior commands something incompatible with it. A Superior must be obeyed, even in opposition to an interior counsel, because we are not merely counselled, but commanded, to obey Superiors. Hence, when a Superior deliberately disapproves of an interior counsel, the soul should believe that it is God's Will to annul His former counsel. (2) When some circumstance arises which alters the state of the difficulty. Even then a change should not be made immediately, though reasons for it seem convincing, but recourse should be had to God for light. Thus the change will be made in virtue of prayer, and stamped with greater purity of intention.

Not to be made in prayer.

In such cases the resolution should seldom be made during the recollection; for, as was said before, thinking of such things is not prayer, but is distraction; and internal illuminations and impulses are better observed afterwards,

when the soul reflects on the impressions received during her recollection.

But when resignation is required it is otherwise, or when we pray for tranquillity of mind amid crosses and difficulties. In such cases we should make our good resolutions during prayer and often renew them afterwards, for they appear to be clear and obligatory ; besides, they are suitable matter for prayer.

Soul must not be troubled if results unsatisfactory.

After the soul has complied with these directions and carried out her resolutions, she should not consider that she has chosen amiss, however unsatisfactory the results. Nor should she listen to the suggestions of her inferior nature, which, finding, perhaps, such practices contrary to its inclination, may subtly seek to move the soul to repent and rescind her resolution. Such suggestions should be despised and dismissed. We may, it is true, err in the manner of executing the counsel of God, and so incur inconvenience and some harm ; but the choice itself, made as described, cannot be otherwise than good, and it would be an act of immortification to blame it or repent of it. God, for our good, often turns our best deeds to our mortification, and then we reap a double benefit.

Absolute certainty not to be expected.

In doubtful cases the soul must not expect to obtain absolute certainty. God, to preserve humility, does not give absolute assurance of the matter considered in itself, but a certainty of being directed only, and of being drawn more to one side than to the other ; and this side, according to the general opinion, is to be chosen and followed as the Divine Will. So that an inclination, however slight, towards one side affords sufficient indication of God's Will to be adopted. If there is no perceptible leaning either way, the soul should seek advice or supply the deficiency with her unbiassed natural judgment. And what she then decides upon she may regard as determined by the direction of the Divine Spirit, because it is God's Will, when He does not direct

us immediately, that we should use inferior or external ways for our guidance, in all things intending His Divine glory and increase in His love.

In known cases.

It would be a presumptuous tempting of God to pray to know His Will in things commanded by laws and Superiors, as they are appointed by God to be the interpreters of His Will. To expect more is to aspire to extraordinary illuminations, which are not to be desired or trusted. Moreover, such a person will be exposed to the illusions of the devil counterfeiting an angel of light. A soul so presumptuous deserves to be deceived by illusions.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DEGREE OF CERTAINTY ATTACHED TO DIVINE INSPIRATIONS

Sufficient certainty attainable.

THESE instructions to attend to Divine inspirations, and the promise of God that He will give His Spirit to those who rightly pray for it, would be of no avail had we no assurance that such inspirations are from God. And by assurance I do not mean the certainty of faith, but the assurance of a confident hope. For the certainty of faith cannot be had without a revelation, and this would suppose an assurance of a state of grace. Hence Thauler, Blosius, and others, teach us how to judge with confidence what is a Divine inspiration. They tell us that the soul that proceeds in matters of importance with resignation and recollection should take that to be the Divine Will to which she is interiorly moved in, or after, her recollection, for at that time passions are less likely to sway her, provided the matter is not contrary to obedience or the laws of God or man.

Indeed, it is certain with the certainty of faith that good thoughts and good actions proceed in virtue only of a precedent and concomitant illumination of our understanding and inclination of our will, both of which are caused by God. Reason and experience, too, tell us that when distracting images cloud our mind or inordinate affections possess our heart, God's illuminations are unperceived or neglected by us, and His impulses are ineffectual. If, then,

the soul is ever in a disposition to receive these effects of God's Holy Spirit, if ever God will make good His deliberate promises, it will surely be when the soul withdraws her affections from herself and all else in a profound recollection, endeavours to expel from her mind all images, transcends all created things, raises herself according to her power to a close union with Him, and begs to be instructed in His Will for His glory and the increase of His Divine love.

As imperfect souls are unable as yet to banish distracting images or to still all unruly passions, they must rely on their natural light in most small matters. Hence, their ordinary actions do not contribute very largely to their spiritual advancement. But with perfect souls it is otherwise. They walk almost continually in supernatural light; they detect and resist the secret suggestions of self-love; they take no step without first consulting their internal Guide, and never act contrary to His directions.

God's guidance secure.

With the utmost confidence, then, we ought to yield ourselves to God, and follow Him in the ways into which He would lead us, through light and darkness, through bitterness and sweetness. What fear can there be of straying with such a Guide — a Guide who leads the soul through paths of mortification and renunciation of self-will? although to the natural judgment and to others these paths may seem at times strange and even devious.

The grounds for submission to our Divine Guide are as follows: (1) Because we are ignorant of our interior disposition and of our spiritual needs, which are beyond the reach of knowledge derived through the senses: consequently we cannot know the special ways of mortification or prayer suitable to us, nor be sure that others sufficiently know them, whereas no one can doubt of the omniscience and goodness of God. (2) Because our end is supernatural; consequently the ways leading thither and the guiding light

must be supernatural. (3) Because even if we knew the best ways leading to contemplation and divine union, we should never choose them without a Divine impulse, because they are opposed to our natural inclination.

Nevertheless there are degrees of security according to the ways in which God communicates His inspirations. For God may direct us (1) through sensible devotion. Hence good thoughts, given in sensible devotion, are in themselves substantially the effects of God's Spirit, and ought to be obeyed with security, provided we act with discretion and are not carried too far, to the prejudice of our head and health. Even then the resolution to adopt some practice in the future is, in a measure, to be distrusted, because there is too much of sensitive nature about it and too little of sincerity and resignation. Besides, as the activity is principally in the senses, the reason is clouded rather than illuminated, and even the devil may exercise influence on the devotion and subsequent resolutions. (2) There is almost as much uncertainty when the inspirations and light are received through the imagination, or by discourse in prayer or out of it. (3) But if the soul be in a state of recollection, with her judgment submissive to God's Will, and her heart detached from natural interests, and she then finds, unexpectedly as it were, one side of the question represented as true and as God's Will by a new light communicated to her reason, she may safely take it to be the action of God's Spirit. Or, again, (4) if she should find a blind, reasonless impulse in the will to one side of the case, she may confidently hold it to be a Divine inspiration or impulse, being produced independently of the imagination, senses, or passions.

Let not, then, the soul be discouraged from committing herself to the internal guidance of God, even though many who pass for spiritual persons regard it with disfavour. They are often strangers to the ways of contemplation, ignorant

of those secret paths by which God leads souls to perfection —paths in which none can make considerable progress till they quit a servile dependence on directors and rely only upon the Divine guidance. For this reason devout souls are to be exhorted to keep themselves as much as possible in solitude and abstraction, so that they may be able to discern the Divine voice. And if they yield themselves faithfully to God's guidance, He will not be wanting to them in anything.

Matter of the resolutions indifferent.

Finally, to show that there can be no considerable danger in this mode of procedure, we should bear in mind that the matter of these resolutions is indifferent, but when well chosen will help the soul to advance in the ways of God. Indeed, in no other things can there be doubt. And if we are capable of learning God's Will in such things --and who can doubt it ?—acting thus, in the spirit of resignation, without haste, passion, or self-love, must surely be the best and safest way of attaining to that knowledge.

BOOK II

MORTIFICATION, THE FIRST INSTRUMENT OF PERFECTION

CHAPTER I

ALL DUTIES EMBRACED BY MORTIFICATION AND PRAYER

Mortification and prayer.

We have fully treated of the nature and end of the contemplative life, and of the Master from whom it is to be learnt. We shall now speak of the means by which this supernatural end may be attained.

In treating of the duties of the spiritual life, each writer has usually divided his subject in his own way. It matters little what method we follow; but as an aid to the reader's memory we will take the shortest and simplest division, viz., (1) Mortification, and (2) Prayer.

That the fitness of this division may be better understood, we should remember that union in spirit with God by love—the end of the contemplative life—is entirely supernatural; so that it would be impossible for man by his natural power to attain to it, even though he were free from sin. Much more is this impossible in his present state; for not only is he most averse from it naturally, but he is filled with nothing but self-love, self-seeking, and pride, all absolutely inconsistent with such union. The foundation of a spiritual life, therefore, must be a true knowledge: (1) of our ourselves, our own nothingness, vileness, and

misery, which should be the object of our aversion and hatred; and (2) of the all-sufficiency, perfection, and incomprehensible beauty and goodness of God, Who should be the only object of our contemplation and love. Consequently our efforts, aided by Divine light and grace, should be directed, first, to renouncing the impediments, and, next, to approaching directly to God, and to an immediate union with Him, the end of our creation and the perfection of our nature. We must flee from ourselves that we may draw nigh unto God. We must destroy self-love that Divine love may reign in our hearts. Now it is by mortification that self-love and our other disorders which hinder divine union are removed, and it is by prayer that we directly tend to divine union. By mortification we exercise the duties and practise the virtues which regard ourselves; for virtue can be called virtue only in so far as it mortifies our inordinate passions and affections, as humility mortifies pride, patience, anger, and so forth. And by prayer we include all our duties relating directly to God—all kinds of acts and operations of the soul towards God, by the understanding, contemplating and admiring Him, by the will and affections adoring, obeying, loving, and adhering to Him. In a word, we mean the whole being, body and soul, resigning, submitting itself, with all that belongs to it, to be disposed of by the Divine Will for time and eternity.

This division derives further commendation from the fact that Hesychius, an ancient, enlightened monk, in his treatise *De Puritate Cordis* reduces all spiritual duties to temperance and prayer. By temperance he understands what is here meant by mortification; for, as he expresses it, temperance is an abstinence from all that disorders the affections or obscures the light of the soul. He calls it custody of the heart, a guard or watch set over the heart, forcing it to repel all idle thoughts which, if too freely admitted, hinder us from observing the snares and sugges-

tions of the devil and of our corrupt nature, and disturb the tranquillity of the soul.

In the duties of mortification and prayer all good is comprised. By mortification and the fundamental virtues of charity and humility, self-love and pride are combated and subdued. And prayer proceeding from charity and humility will obtain for us, and even directly ingraft in us, a new Divine principle, the Holy Spirit. This Divine principle will become a new life in us, the very soul of our soul, and will raise us higher and higher out of our corrupt nature, till at last we are made one with God by a union as perfect, constant, and immediate as an intellectual soul is capable of in this life.

Their necessity.

These duties of mortification and prayer are both so absolutely necessary that they must continue to increase in perfection and strength to the end of our lives. For though self-love and pride may be subdued by mortification, they can never be rooted out as long as we are imprisoned in mortal bodies; even perfect souls will find in themselves matter for mortification. Also our union with God by prayer can never be so constant as to be uninterrupted. The soul will sometimes fall from her height into the natural man to some extent. Nor is there any degree of prayer so pure and spiritual but that it may by exercise become still more pure and perfect without all limits.

They help each other.

The diligent exercise of the one advances the practice of the other. As mortification is not only a good disposition to prayer, but is so necessary that without it the soul cannot even look at God with a hearty desire to please Him; so by prayer, on the other hand, the soul obtains light to discover her inordinate affections and strength effectually to subdue them.

Prayer the more noble.

It appears, then, that of the two, prayer is much the more noble and valuable exercise. (1) Because the essential happiness of this life and of the life to come consists in the

prayer of contemplation; whereas mortification is only a means to that end, for the soul mortifies her inordinate affections to dispose herself to union with God. (2) Because mortifications are never profitably undertaken except in virtue of prayer; whereas it is possible for prayer alone to advance the soul considerably without any notable mortification — at least, when God does not provide them. (3) Because prayer is in itself a most excellent mortification, for by it the secret risings of the passions are disclosed and checked, and the mind and superior will are elevated above our inferior nature; so that for the time passions are quieted, and creatures, especially ourselves, are transcended and forgotten.

God seldom fails, however, to provide us with occasions of mortification out of prayer, and if we neglect to use them to promote our spiritual advancement, we shall lose ground as regards both grace and prayer. But by using them well we shall advance speedily in the ways of the Spirit. Neither, therefore, alone is to be relied upon. Mortification without prayer will be superficial, or worse — hypocritical; and prayer with neglect of mortification will be heartless, distracted, and of little value.

The subject, then, of this and of the following book will be the recommendation of these two necessary instruments of contemplation. We shall treat first of mortification, not only because it is the less perfect, but also because a right use of it disposes us for prayer and prepares the way for it. It levels the mountains of pride, raises the valleys of sloth, smoothes the roughness and inequalities of our passions, and especially removes that great impediment, attachment to our natural, carnal will.

CHAPTER II

MORTIFICATION OF AFFECTION FOR VENIAL SINS

It is my purpose to treat of mortification, first in general, and afterwards of the special kinds which more particularly concern interior souls. As to disorders which are generally acknowledged to be sinful, whether mortal or venial; or actions and omissions which cannot under any circumstances be permitted, as, for example, officious lies, small acts of revenge or calumny—these form no part of our subject. The souls for whose benefit these instructions are intended are not supposed to be in need of advice concerning such matters. They are desirous, even resolved, to abandon all things, to cast aside all inordinate attachments that may kill the soul, render it sickly, or stain its lustre and brightness.

Not a question of sin.

We are concerned, then, chiefly with the mortification of defects which, though in themselves sinful, are not acknowledged as such by all, and are called imperfections. They are sins which, considering our frailty, can hardly be avoided, and can never be wholly rooted out. They are conversant about objects which we may lawfully use, but which we use with some slight deviation from strict rectitude, adhering to or being averted from them. In a word, they are sins which it would be endless labour, except when they are of a more serious character, to make a matter of

But of imperfections.

confession, although their correction should be the object of our daily care.

I will endeavour to explain my meaning more fully, as it is the subject of the following pages. There are continually presented to our outward and inward senses innumerable objects pleasing and displeasing to them. Moreover, the functions of life, which we are bound to maintain, cannot be exercised without admitting the use of many things agreeable to our sensitive nature—meats, drink, relaxations of mind, and so forth. We cannot, therefore, escape from them; but in their use we should be guided by this principle: we should consider that none of these things pleasing to the natural appetite are to be adhered to with affection, but the simple use of them is allowed us for the good of the soul. Moreover, the satisfaction which the natural appetite takes in them is to be admitted only in so far as it is conducive to the welfare of the spirit or rational will, enabling it to pursue its chief good more cheerfully. To admit sometimes, with this intention and with discretion, reasonable comforts and pleasures is not unlawful; on the contrary, it is fitting and even necessary.

But when we consider the inexpressible corruption of our nature, the strong adhesion of our affections to pleasing objects, the feeble dominion the superior faculties of the soul have over our sensitive nature, it becomes necessary, not only to be watchful over the sensitive appetite, to restrain it from the too eager pursuit of objects proper to it, but also even to reduce the number of those objects, withholding it from not a few of the contentments offered to it. In a word, we should take pains to prevent it from running blindly on before, or from pursuing things pleasing to it without the guidance and control of reason. And when we perceive it doing so, we should call it back, and suffer not our reason to favour it and join in its desires,

but rather reserve our rational inclinations and affections for God.

Our state is very different from that of Adam before his fall. Then it was no inconvenience to him, rather, perhaps, a help, to use freely the pleasures afforded him in Paradise. Though sensible pleasures were far more delightful to him than they can be to us, on account of the exquisite delicacy of his physical constitution, still they did not incline him to the least excess. His spirit was so replenished with Divine love that indulgence in innocent pleasures rather intensified than diminished or interrupted his tending to God, and the expression of his gratitude, love, and obedience to Him. But we experience quite contrary effects; we must, therefore, take another course.

What constitutes sin.

This, then, is the ground of the practice of mortification, so necessary in a spiritual life; these are the venial sins or imperfections that we must continually combat against. Indeed, in this is found the difference between perfect and imperfect Christians, as well as between perfect souls in an active life and perfect souls in a contemplative. Thus wicked men give way deliberately to the habitual enjoyment of sensible pleasures without regard to their soul's welfare or to God, even contrary to His commands. Imperfect Christians, again, while not yielding so far as the former, still take little or no care to root out of their souls an habitual love for sensible pleasures, except when in danger of expelling charity from their souls. And, lastly, the perfect in an active state of life, from want of habitual recollection, have insufficient light to discover the many little things in which they yield to sense, forestalling reason and enjoying contentment in outward things, without the purity of intention which contemplatives exercise who lead far less distracted lives than they do.

Affection to venial sin.

There are still a few considerations about venial sins in relation to a contemplative life which I should like to add.

If for perfection in a contemplative life absolute freedom from venial defects were required, perfection would be impossible, considering the incurable frailty of our nature, the frequency of temptation, and the impossibility of being always actually on guard over oneself. It is true, by perseverance in spiritual prayer, accompanied by mortification, such defects become both less serious and less frequent. But though prayer and mortification be continued ever so long, the soul will find it necessary to be in continual resistance against her perverse inclinations, and in these combats she will sometimes come off with loss.

Venial sins, therefore, are not inconsistent with perfection, although committed ever so often out of frailty, inadvertence, or ignorance. But if they are committed deliberately, habitually, and with affection, they render the soul incapable of perfection in prayer.

Nature of affection to sin.

This is a point of great importance. And that we may distinguish rightly between sinning out of frailty or inadvertence, and sinning out of affection to the objects, we should bear in mind: First, that they are said to fall into venial sins out of frailty who commit them only when an occasion or temptation presents itself against their will. They are then surprised with a sudden passion, or are taken off their guard; but on observing their fault they presently return to themselves with sorrow and self-condemnation, entertaining an aversion (at least in the superior will) from what hinders their approach to God. Or if not at the time, at their next recollection the offence (if of any moment) will return to mind, and they will be moved to sorrow and obtain pardon. But when free of such temptations and occasions they entertain no pleasure in those objects, much less do they seek the occasions.

They, in the next place, are said to sin out of affection who neglect these faults, both before they fall into them and afterwards, who are so far from avoiding the

occasions of them that they even seek them. And this they do out of affection, not for the fault, but for the things which they see occasion the fault. These are the persons who love smart apparel, delicate meats, idle conversations, or who delight in attending festive gatherings, at which they not unfrequently incur many defects. They may perhaps feel regret for such sins, and mention them with sorrow in confession. But their sorrow proceeds not from the whole heart, for it is insufficient to make them avoid the occasions, even when this may be done with little inconvenience or trouble. Indeed, they do not sufficiently recognise that the very love of those vanities (if deliberate) is in itself an imperfection, though no other defects were occasioned by it. Such souls can make no progress in spiritual prayer. As long as voluntary affection to sins or to their occasions is not mortified, they daily recede further from God, and become more and more indisposed to prayer. And their prayer becomes so distracted and full of disquieting remorse that it is almost impossible to persevere in an exercise so painful.

A hundred imperfections, even though of somewhat greater moment, are not so opposed to perfection, if incurred by inadvertence or infirmity, as is an affection for the least imperfection, although it be but an idle thought. The soul, therefore, on entering into the internal ways of the spirit, should cut off at once deliberate affection to all venial sins and their occasions, seeking with discretion to avoid them ; although it may happen without any great injury to her progress that she is often surprised into sin, and overcome by many faults.

And let no one imagine that he can retain deliberate affection to venial sin without hopelessly blocking his way to perfection, merely because a few examples (almost miraculous) are found in which, notwithstanding such affections, God has visited souls with supernatural favours,

as an eminent saint (St. Teresa) writes of herself. She may have been excusably ignorant of the unlawfulness of such affections, or she may have received such extraordinary favours, not so much for her own sake as for the good of others, that she might be the mistress and teacher of true contemplative prayer, at that time almost unknown in the world.

Most certain it is, however, that in the ordinary course of Divine providence perfection in prayer is accompanied by a proportionate perfection in mortification. If, therefore, souls seem to enjoy great spiritual light and profound recollection in prayer, while still retaining a voluntary habitual affection to venial sins or their occasions, it is to be feared that all is not right with them, and that the devil has much to say to devotion so destitute of true mortification.

CHAPTER III

THE NECESSITY OF MORTIFICATION

In all that we love or seek we naturally love and seek ourselves only. We are our own last end, referring all things, natural and supernatural, even God Himself, to our own interest and good. We seek things pleasing to the inward and outward senses, as if the happiness of our soul and of our person consisted in sensible pleasures, the esteem of others, worldly profit, or the delights of knowledge. Hence there can be no merit in the natural man as such, or in the actions proceeding from him. Love of self.

Some, indeed, are naturally of a tranquil disposition and free from passions. They seem to be little troubled with rebellion in their sensitive nature, and have oftentimes a kind of natural devotion; yet even these are often full of self-love, from which many of their actions flow. Nor is there hope of a remedy, till by prayer they obtain light to discover their self-love and grace to subdue it by mortification. Even in the best dispositions.

However, a naturally good disposition is beneficial, especially in two ways: Firstly, it preserves souls from many sins into which more impetuous passionate natures fall; consequently they place fewer impediments in the way of grace. But unless they practise prayer and mortification, it is to be feared they will increase in spiritual pride; for if our corrupt nature be not restrained, it will in one way or another grow more and more disorderly. And secondly, Benefit of a good disposition.

such dispositions are well fitted for internal prayer, even for the most perfect kind, the prayer of aspirations ; so that with comparatively little labour they get out of the natural man and lift themselves up to God.

Self-love to be avoided.

It is, therefore, absolutely necessary to mortify our natural self, and especially to correct the habit of self-seeking, by which we make ourselves our last end, the end of all we do. This is accomplished by the infusion of Divine grace, by which we are directed to God as to our last end. And a necessary disposition for Divine charity is the mortification of self-love. Hence on all Christians lies the obligation of mortifying the grievously sinful disorders of their souls. And for souls aspiring to perfection, there is the further necessity of mortifying deliberate affection to even the least venial defects and deviations from uprightness of soul. Thus we must never admit into our minds deliberately and habitually idle thoughts, nor yield in word or deed to vain love, vain hope, vain fear, or vain sorrow.

Mortification subjects the whole man to God.

Mortification tends to subject the body to the spirit, and the spirit to God. It does this by curbing the inclinations of sense, which are contrary to the Divine Spirit, who should be our only principle. By afflicting the body and restraining its inclinations, self-love and self-will, the poison of the spirit, are abated and in a measure destroyed. And in their place the Divine Love and the Divine Will enter and take possession. Herein consists our happiness and perfection.

Benefits of mortification.

Broadly speaking, mortification includes the exercise of all virtues ; for in every act of virtue we mortify some disordered passion or inclination, so that to attain to perfect mortification is to be possessed of every virtue.

The benefits obtained by the exercise of mortification are many and precious : (1) By it we avoid the sin we would have committed. (2) It purifies the soul. (3) It procures grace and spiritual strength. (4) One act of

mortification enables us to perform another. On the other hand, by yielding to our corrupt nature we are weakened, and are less able to resist another time. (5) It lessens our suffering in purgatory by our bearing some of it in this life. A little pain here will save long and sharp pains at a future time. (6) It procures interior light by calming the unruliness of the passions which cloud the soul. (7) It produces great peace, which is disturbed only by unquiet passions. (8) It helps the soul to advance in spiritual prayer and contemplation, the end of all our spiritual exercises. (9) It gives edification. (10) It increases our future happiness and glory.

Courage required.

The duty of mortification, then, is absolutely necessary for the soul. Indeed, we may say that nothing benefits an imperfect soul much that does not cross and mortify some deviation from uprightness in her natural inclinations. The soul, therefore, that intends to walk in the ways of contemplation stands in great need of courage, for her aim must be to overcome herself in everything to which she naturally bears an affection. To maintain her courage she must have recourse to much prayer, and think often and seriously of the blessings which accompany and follow its practice, remembering that custom will render tolerable, and even pleasant, what at first appeared almost unendurable.

Advice to beginners.

As for beginners in a spiritual life, they should consider that their souls are so full of impurities and defects that in scarcely any of their actions do they purely seek God; not even in those which are done with the greatest deliberation and calmness of spirit and with the fullest preparation, much less in actions in which their passions take part. It is best for them during their imperfect state to suppress as best they can all movement of their passions, not suffering them to rise and swell within them, even with the intention of performing their duties more heartily and fervently.

And for this reason: imperfect souls are not yet masters of their passions, and cannot prevent them from causing disorder (when stirred) even in their superior rational faculties. And though reason can raise them at pleasure, it cannot easily calm them again or control them, nor can it hinder such souls from pursuing those objects from motives of corrupt nature, instead of from the spiritual motives employed at first.

The advice to restrain all passions and disturbance in our sensitive nature does not apply in every case. Just reason and the necessary care of others may sometimes require that a thing be done with warmth; or it may be necessary in the case of superiors when correcting their subjects. In such cases it may be right and proper to give way with discretion to some show of anger, without which the reproof might have but little effect. But care must be taken not to prejudice thereby internal quiet of mind, and much more not to diminish true charity.

CHAPTER IV

GENERAL RULES OF MORTIFICATION

General rules of mortification.

For discreet, well-minded souls these three general rules may suffice to guide them in the duties of mortification : (1) To do what any law, human or divine, shall require of them, and to refrain from anything forbidden by such laws ; and in cases where there is no law, to follow the light and guidance that God may afford them by means of prayer, doing or not doing as they find will promote their spiritual advancement without enslaving themselves to particular examples, customs, or instructions. (2) To suffer with patience and resignation the crosses and contradictions which befall them by God's providence; whether the crosses regard external things, as injuries, disgrace, sickness, loss of goods, and so forth ; or internal, as aridities, obscurity, temptations, or rebellion of passions. All these things must be suffered quietly, whether they proceed from God directly or from creatures. (3) To do things that are agreeable to our nature, such as recreation and refection, not because they are agreeable, but because they are conformable to God's will. So also in regard of disagreeable things that are to be omitted. By the constant and careful observance of these directions the soul may be brought to an established habit of mortification, and yet preserve a convenient liberty of mind, which will enable her to pursue her internal ways cheerfully.

They include two useful practices.

Moreover, if the soul is careful to have at least a virtual intention of the love and glory of God, she will practise the continual presence of God in the best and securest way, a practice so much recommended by spiritual authors, and particularly by our holy Father, in the first degree of humility.

This exercise enables us securely to bear in mind our own nothingness, a practice also much recommended. For self-love and self-will, by which we seem to ourselves to be something, are rooted out, not only in imagination and desire, but really and effectually, and the disordered affections of the soul are mortified and cut off. It is for that purpose only that the practice is so much commended. In a word, by such practices, joined with the intention of glorifying God and seeking His Divine love, the soul will be well disposed for perfect prayer of contemplation.

Mortification best exercised in virtue of prayer.

There are so many conditions and circumstances—the manner, motive, principle, and end—required to perfect our actions, and our corrupt nature is so quick to intrude its own interests into everything, that without an extraordinary light, which can be obtained from God only by prayer, we cannot discover the inclinations of our heart. The reason that light can be obtained by prayer only is because in prayer the least defect or most secret suggestion of nature hinders our view and contemplation of God and our tending to Him; consequently it is more easily seen, being set between our eyes and the sun. Whereas in our ordinary vocal prayers and external good actions only greater temptations perceptibly distract us from God.

Those, then, who do not pursue internal prayer can restrain their passions from breaking forth into outward expression only. The evil root remains still alive, and causes inward disorders very displeasing to God.

When crosses and adversity are borne by the strength of reason, and not in virtue of Divine grace and prayer, the

principal effect is only to vex and trouble ourselves ; or at most we mortify the superabundant activity of the interior senses and natural affections, and may render ourselves more judicious, prudent, and temperate ; but this method penetrates not to the spirit itself, nor does it purify the soul or diminish self-love. Moreover, crosses borne in virtue of the grace which ordinary extroverted Christians enjoy, though such grace may preserve them from the grievous effects of self-love, still it is far from expelling the secret self-love which lurks in the inmost centre of the soul. So that, notwithstanding the effects of such crosses, these Christians may remain full of serious stains and infirmities, and Divine love may burn but fitfully in their hearts and may easily be extinguished.

But difficulties borne in virtue of grace obtained by internal prayer scour, as it were, and purify the spirit itself from the rust of disordered affections. They thus spiritualize the faculties of the soul and cause it to become a pure spirit, exalting it, separating it from sensible objects, from which alone proceed all vicious impurities. This is the division of the soul and the spirit mentioned by St. Paul, in which the purified spirit works as a spirit, unobscured by sensible ends and interests.

A distinction between active and contemplative souls.

The mortification, therefore, practised by interior contemplative souls differs from that of active souls, even though in the religious state and advanced in active exercises. The latter combat their disordered affections directly and expressly by meditating upon their deformity, danger, and so forth ; also by exercising contrary acts of virtue to repress the unruly passion. But contemplative souls mortify their passions indirectly, yet far more efficaciously, by transcending them, by elevating and uniting their spirit to God with pure, intellectural acts and impulses, forgetting and, as it were, drowning in God their sensible desires and all created things, especially themselves. So that in temptation

they turn not to the object with the view of resisting it, but by a strong act of resignation and love they direct their spirit to God, scorning to cast a look upon creatures which would allure their heart from God and defile their soul.

Pure prayer the principal means of acquiring mortification.

External exercises of virtue, therefore, frequent confessions, communions, acts of obedience, and austerities, however excellent, are not the principal means by which the soul is brought to a state of perfect freedom from exterior and interior immortification. The principal instrument is pure spiritual prayer, especially the sublime degrees of it—aspirations, pure elevations of the will, and similar divine operations. By such acts only can the soul transcend her inferior nature and live in the quiet, secure, illuminated region of the spirit.

Advice to imperfect souls.

Till the devout soul attains to such perfection in prayer, she must be content to work according to her present light and strength, endeavouring to correct her defects by the less perfect exercises of the active way. She should also bear with patience and quietness of spirit her own imperfections, as she would bear with the faults of others, awaiting God's own time, and hastening its approach by earnest prayer. By this means alone will she be able to expel those defects which so much exercise and trouble her, and to discover and correct many others which her eyes are yet too blind and weak to see.

God's provident care of all.

Indeed, the provident care which God has over all His children, perfect and imperfect, is wonderful, being suited to the present state of each one. He does not usually send to imperfect souls other than ordinary mortifications, proportionate to their weakness, such as gall their sensitive nature, but do not pierce to the quick and centre of the spirit, which remains free to support the former. But for souls arrived at the state of perfection or near it, God usually provides strange, inexpressible mortifications, subtle temptations, privations, and desolations, which, when

worthily borne, wonderfully purify the spirit. Of the former mortifications St. Paul speaks thus: '*There hath no temptation taken hold of you but such as is human*' (1 Cor. x. 13); and of the latter: '*Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood*' (the usual temptations of God's imperfect children), *but against principalities, and powers, against the governors of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places* (or things)' (Eph. vi. 12).

Mortification and prayer help one another.

Every act of mortification performed in virtue of interior prayer increases in us the grace of God, and disposes us to a more perfect prayer. And, on the contrary, every act of immortification increases self-love, and makes us indisposed to interior prayer. Again, prayer strengthens us for future mortifications, teaching how to undertake them and how to bear them. These duties, therefore, should never be separated. This comprises all that an interior soul is bound to do.

A difficulty which besets beginners.

I will conclude this chapter on mortification in general with a warning addressed to the soul leading an interior life. It may prevent an inconvenience which might otherwise take her by surprise. It may happen that religious or spiritual persons will find greater difficulty in mortifying or renouncing some natural contentment after they have entered on a spiritual course than they found when they led an unrecollected life in the world. When they experience this, scrupulous or disquieting thoughts may arise, suggesting to their minds that the change they have made is not for the better, or that there is something amiss with them, they know not what. But a little consideration will show them that this is not very strange, and that it does not deserve an anxious thought.

And for these reasons: (1) If such a person did not pursue an interior life, he would be able to overcome one pleasure by turning to another; thus he would recompense himself for his loss. But having embraced a spiritual life,

he has abandoned resolutely all sensible pleasures as such; he cannot, therefore, recompense the bitterness found in one mortification by yielding to pleasure on another occasion. (2) Again, an imperfect soul will find it necessary to allow some relaxation to her inferior nature, to sustain her bodily weakness, and to prevent a cheerless, discontented habit of mind. But when such relaxation is denied her, she will be apt to grow impatient; and if she endeavour to restrain herself, she will do it only feebly and faintly. (3) It is impossible for a soul to live without taking pleasure in something which affords contentment either to sense or to the spirit. But the imperfect soul has but little sensible pleasure in the exercises of the spiritual life, except when God now and again visits her with sensible devotion. Her chief pleasure is in hope, and that affords little comfort to the body; it concerns the spirit alone. And hope is not as attractive as present sensible pleasure. (4) Besides, an imperfect soul has not yet chased out of her superior faculties all affection for sensible pleasure, and consequently she finds little else but pain in all her exercises of mortification and prayer. It is not surprising, then, that she finds difficulty in rejecting pleasure sometimes, when it comes her way. Indeed, the greatest pain arises, not so much from the objects of mortification as from the tediousness, the weariness of being continually in a state of suffering, which she thinks must last till the end of her life. This is painful; but by the constant practice of mortification and prayer, the weariness will daily diminish, till at length the renunciation of natural contentment will become easy and even pleasant to her. (5) Lastly, she may regard it as a proof of God's goodness to her that He suffers her to experience so much difficulty now. For by that means God humbles her and teaches her not to rely on herself, nor to promise herself the least good from her own strength.

CHAPTER V

VOLUNTARY AND NECESSARY MORTIFICATION

Mortification of two kinds.

We have spoken of mortification in general: we come now to its divisions. It may be divided into: (1) Necessary and (2) voluntary. This is a division of which we shall make great use; it therefore deserves to be explained with some fulness.

By necessary mortifications are meant: (1) Crosses and afflictions which we cannot avoid, even if we would, whether external or internal—sickness, want, loss of friends, temptations, desolations, or humiliations. These are the most beneficial mortifications, for they are sent to us for our good by the wise and merciful providence of God. (2) Those that we suffer in virtue of our assumed state of life, as by constitutions, by obedience to superiors, by our intercourse with our equals, inferiors, and so forth. (3) Those that we undertake by the direction of our confessor or spiritual director. (4) Those works which true discretion requires of us, the omission of which would be contrary to prudence. (5) Whatever we have to suffer from creatures, or from the devil himself, even though we have brought it upon ourselves. (6) Lastly, all those things we accept willingly by virtue of an interior Divine impulse, with the approbation of our spiritual father.

By voluntary mortification, on the other hand, are understood such as we assume voluntarily out of our own heads,

without the advice of our spiritual guide, or without due discretion, because we have heard of others who have undertaken them with profit: as, for instance, to assume fasts beyond what the Church and regular observance require, or to wear a hair shirt, chains, and so forth, or to observe obstinate silence during the time appointed for conversation, or to undertake many vocal prayers not prescribed.

This distinction must be kept in mind by the devout reader, and whatever is here recommended as regards mortification must be understood to apply to mortifications of necessity only. Moreover, these directions are intended only for souls who pursue, or desire to pursue, an interior course tending to contemplation.

Taking necessary mortification in its fullest sense, as explained above, the devout soul is to be exhorted to accept such mortifications and bear them cheerfully, with courage and fervour. This is her plain duty. She may also bear in mind that besides the inestimable benefits attending them, already alluded to, they are of great security, and are free from the danger of error, indiscretion, or pride.

Voluntary mortifications.

As for voluntary mortifications, as explained above, we must have nothing to do with them. Indeed, I would never counsel a spiritual disciple to assume any considerable mortifications beyond such as attend his state of life, until he is confident that he has a call from God to do so; that is, till he has spent a considerable time in interior prayer, and has received light to judge of their fitness for him, and spiritual strength to pursue them cheerfully. Moreover, he must obtain the approbation of his superior or his spiritual director. Though he have a body as strong as Samson, I would not suggest to him extraordinary mortifications, unless they were required as a remedy against some special temptation. In this case it would not be an extraordinary or voluntary mortification, but rather ordinary and

necessary, when we consider his present state. If I were consulted by such an one about their use, and if on examination I found it doubtful whether he were moved by a Divine inspiration, I should take the safer course and dissuade him from attempting them.

It is true we find that most saints have practised extraordinary mortifications, many even from their infancy. But this shows that souls fit for such mortifications are rare. God leads them Himself in these unusual paths to make them examples of the power of His grace for the edification of many, using them as His instruments in great works. But we should not consider that God intends us for such extraordinary things. It will suffice, therefore, if we bear the mortifications God provides for us, believing Him to know what is best for us and what is proportionate to our weakness.

Great caution, therefore, should be observed in using instructions and examples of mortifications found in spiritual books, otherwise the soul may plunge herself into great difficulties. For by imitating such practices it is to be feared that an imperfect soul will entertain a high opinion of herself, and failing the grace to persevere, she will become scrupulous and dejected, and fall away perhaps altogether from the pursuit of the ways of the spirit. She may even incur an obscurity of mind (especially if she be unlearned), so that she will be unable to distinguish necessary mortifications from voluntary.

Mortification in everything inadvisable.

Some spiritual writers advise the soul to choose what is most contrary to her natural inclination when the matter is indifferent; as, for example, if several dishes are set before us, to eat only of the one we like least, thus living in the constant contradiction and mortification of nature. But such advice is very hard, and would prove dangerous to many souls. Only such as are in a measure perfect could profit by it and practise it with facility and discretion. If

imperfect souls attempt to follow it willingly, it is to be feared that they covertly yield to their nature in some other way, by nourishing self-esteem, perhaps, or by contemning others who are not so courageous, or who do not afford so much edification, and so forth.

Danger of the practice.

Indeed, it were folly and inexcusable pride for souls who do not diligently pursue interior prayer, or practise perfect resignation and patience in crosses which are sent by God, or which belong to their state, to attempt to undertake mortifications of their own election; for lacking Divine light, how can they judge what is proper for them? And if they are unable to encounter necessary difficulties, why should they think themselves prepared for extraordinary ones? Such souls bear with these mortifications mainly because they proceed from self-judgment and self-will; hence their mortifications are more pleasing than distasteful to their nature.

The evil attending the indiscreet, eager use of such mortifications is much greater in an interior life than in an active, because liberty of spirit is much more necessary for the former than for the latter. Liberty of spirit is much hindered by unnecessary obligations and fetters imposed by a soul upon herself.

Least hurtful voluntary mortifications.

Of supernumerary mortifications, the least prejudicial to liberty are those which work least upon the mind. These may prove useful sometimes. Thus manual labour not of obligation is less harmful than multiplying voluntary vocal prayers; for the latter will probably prejudice the proper exercise not only of internal recollection, but also of such vocal prayers as are of obligation. The most profitable, perhaps, are those that regard not-doing, as silence, solitude, and the like. Such mortifications, if used with discretion and without binding oneself by strict obligation, may sometimes be undertaken even by imperfect souls.

I do not, therefore, wholly exclude even imperfect souls

from the use of additional mortifications, for such may be God's will. In that case, it is most certain that it will much hasten their progress towards perfection; for he that runs will come to his journey's end sooner than he who travels at an ordinary pace. But if he force his pace beyond his strength, the advantage he obtained for a little while will not avail against his subsequent loss.

Signs of proper mortifications.

The signs by which the soul may know whether the mortifications assumed by her proceed from the Divine impulse, and not from natural inclination or passion, are such as these: (1) She must bear herself well under her ordinary necessary mortifications, supporting cheerfully and courageously the austerities of the religious life and all incidental crosses. (2) She must have the advice and approbation of a director skilful in discerning spirits. (3) She should be cheerful and resolute in pursuing them, for discontent and melancholy are a bad sign. (4) They should be undertaken in virtue of a quiet, constant, interior invitation, and not from sudden humour, passion, remorse, fit of sensible devotion, or ambition to imitate others. If they are at all injurious to health, the impulse must be very certain and strong. (5) By perseverance in them the virtue of humility should be increased. (6) Lastly, they should dispose the soul to recollection, and to constancy and fervour in prayer.

Lack of mortifications unusual.

To conclude. There are few who need complain of want of mortifications, or who are under the necessity of asking for them. All observances, even the least, that are practised in religion—obedience to a spiritual director, much more contradictions, humiliations, and penances—are all profitable mortifications. Even the acts of authority exercised by superiors, if they are done not out of a natural impulse or love of commanding, but in obedience to the Rule and with the thought that God will demand an account of them, are also excellent mortifications. And if

this is not enough, a faithful pursuit of prayer and abstraction will sufficiently abate the activity of our nature, and as a rule will suffice to bring souls to perfection, if they live out their due time. And if they are not spared, yet death, finding them in the right way, will bring them to their desired end. Lastly, such is the tenderness and care of God towards souls who truly and heartily consecrate themselves to Him, that if these mortifications are not sufficient, by a special providence He will provide what is requisite. Indeed, a sublime mystic writer confidently asserts that God will provide for the soul's needs by a miracle, or, by a supernatural light, will direct her and forcibly impel her to find the necessary mortifications, rather than allow her to suffer any prejudice by the want of them.

CHAPTER VI

ABSTRACTION AND SOLITUDE

General kinds of mortification.

BEFORE we deal with the various kinds of mortification which concern the several passions and affections—for these are what we mortify—we will speak first of general mortifications which regard not single passions but many. They may be divided as follows: (1) abstraction; (2) solitude; (3) silence; (4) peace or tranquillity of mind.

Abstraction.

First, abstraction of life. This duty consists: (1) In not meddling with things which do not concern us. (2) In matters which do concern us, in performing them with self-restraint, not pouring out our affections upon them, for our affections are due to God alone; but this should not hinder us from doing our duty with care and attention. (3) In relinquishing unnecessary converse with others, correspondence, complimentary visits, and still more the engagement of the affections in particular friendships.*

* Father Baker's views on friendships seem unduly severe and rigorous. Friendship has been a solace and support to many illustrious saints. Witness the friendships of St. Basil, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Jerome, St. Bernard, St. Anselm, and a host of other less well-known names. Indeed, St. Teresa rather encourages friendships among her spiritual children. In her life (cap. vii.) occurs the following passage: 'It is a great evil for a soul to be alone in the midst of such great dangers. For this reason I would advise those who give themselves to prayer, particularly at first, to form friendships and converse familiarly with

The true ground for the necessity of abstraction is this: divine union in spirit, the principal object of an interior soul, can only be attained by the exclusion of all other images and affections.* And by abstraction the soul brings herself to unity, detachment, and simplicity. For this purpose the soul leaves the world, and if she practise not abstraction in religion, she as good as returns to the world which by her profession she renounced. Hence the wise man's saying: Wisdom is found in a state of leisure, and he that diminishes external employments shall attain to her.†

I shall return again to this subject in the next book, showing especially how the soul should behave in distracting employment, so as not to hinder her recollections.

Solitude. The next general mortification is solitude. Solitude

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others who are doing the same thing. It is a matter of the last importance, even if it lead only to helping one another by prayer; how much more, seeing that it has led to much greater gain! Now, if in their intercourse with one another, and in the indulgence of human affections not of the best kind, men seek friends with whom they may refresh themselves, and for the purpose of having greater satisfaction in speaking of their empty joys, I know no reason why it should not be lawful for him who is beginning to love and serve God in earnest to confide to another his joys and sorrows.'

* St. Teresa was of the same opinion. She says: 'I think that whenever His Majesty bestows it (divine union), He gives it to such only as are already disengaged from the things of the world. I do not mean to say that they are actually so, for their state, perhaps, may not allow it, but they are so in their affections and desires.' And again: 'It is very certain that by disengaging ourselves from all creatures, and withdrawing ourselves from them for the love of God, the same Lord will fill us with Himself.' And again elsewhere she says of the soul that has attained to perfect contemplation: 'If this soul should grow negligent, and set her affection on something else besides Him, then she will lose everything' ('The Interior Castle').

† 'Sapientia in tempore vacuitatis et qui minoratur actu, sapientiam percipiet' (Ecclus. xxxviii. 25).

differs from abstraction in this, that the former concerns the exterior and the latter the interior. Abstraction is an interior solitude of spirit; solitude is an exterior abstraction of the person. Abstraction may be practised by a fervent soul amid the noise and bustle of the world, preserving herself from the engagement of her affections to persons or things, and ever remaining with her heart free to attend to God. And, on the other hand, some souls in the most retired solitude plunge their minds and affections into endless solicitudes about persons and affairs abroad, and are continually engaged in writing and answering letters, advising souls, inquiring after news or retailing it. By these means their minds are filled with thoughts and images, and they are rendered less capable of spiritual converse with God than many who live in the world. And as in their secluded state they are to some extent ignorant, or at least uncertain, of the results of their advice and correspondence, they are kept in continual solicitude about everything except their own souls.* Indeed, if interior

* The advice contained in this passage must not be pressed too far, or it will tend to make us undervalue or neglect that most necessary duty—the love of our neighbour. As St. Teresa well points out: 'There are only two duties which our Lord requires of us, viz., the love of God and the love of our neighbour. These are the objects we must labour for; by observing these laws perfectly we do His will, and consequently we shall be united to Him.' And lest we should fear that by loving our neighbour we shall love God less, she goes on to say: 'And be assured that the further you advance in that love (the love of our neighbour), the more you will advance in the love of God likewise; for the affection which His Majesty has for us is so great that, as a return for the love we show our neighbour, He will make that love go on *increasing* which we have for Himself. Of this I have no doubt.' And though prayer, by which we exercise love directly to God, must not be neglected, it must not be made an excuse for the omission of love of our neighbour. Hence St. Teresa writes: 'When I see souls so very attentive at their prayers . . . so that it seems they dare not so much as stir or divert their thoughts lest they should lose

abstraction and prayer be not joined to external solitude, the latter will be a hindrance rather than a help to spiritual perfection.

There is another kind of solitude which may be called a philosophical solitude, which is used by religious not to seek God more freely, but to attend to studies and to enrich their minds with much learning. Study and reading are, indeed, a suitable change of occupation, especially since manual labour has fallen into disuse; but the study should not be such as will puff up the mind with pride, or make us forward and contentious. Moreover, an inward love of knowledge and curiosity of mind are, perhaps (*cæteris paribus*), more prejudicial to contemplation, and produce effects more hurtful to the soul, because more deeply rooted in the spirit itself, than some kinds of sensible affections.

The solitude here recommended, and which belongs especially to the religious life, consists in a real love of our cell, through which we abide there habitually except when conventual duties require otherwise, and admit there no converse but God's, and no employment but for Him. 'Keep thy cell,' says an ancient holy Father, 'and thy cell will teach thee all things.' If the soul will but use a little violence with herself at first, she will soon come to love this solitude, so that she may more freely and intimately hold converse with God, and it is incredible what progress she will make in internal ways. But if she neglect solitude, she will reap nothing but tepidity, worldly aims, or sensible pleasure.

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the little pleasure and devotion they feel in their prayer, I then clearly discover how little they understand the way by which they may arrive at union, because they suppose all the business consists in this. No! sisters, no! Our Lord desires *works*. If, then, you see a sick sister whom you can in any way relieve, never fear you will lose your devotion if you sympathize with her. If she be in pain, grieve with her, and, if necessary, fast, that so she may have something to eat. . . . This is true union with His will' ('The Interior Castle').

To lighten the tediousness of solitude, especially at the beginning, the soul should use a prudent liberty of spirit about her employments and the occupation of her mind in private, prudently using variety in them, changing one when it becomes burdensome for another more agreeable, sometimes reading, sometimes writing, other times working, often praying. Sometimes she may remain, if she find it convenient, disengaged for a while, both internally and externally, yet ever with at least a virtual attention to God and a tending towards Him, referring all to Him and to His glory. Thus, she can say with the Psalmist, I will reserve my principal strength to be employed for Thee, O my God.* All other employments, except those of obligation, should be regulated according to the needs of the spirit, so that the soul may come cheerfully and with an appetite to her appointed recollections. Such was the counsel given by a holy ancient hermit to one of his brethren when asked how time should be employed out of prayer. 'Whatsoever thy mind,' said he, 'according to God shall bid thee do, that do thou.' And, indeed, after a reasonable time spent in solitude and internal prayer, the soul will receive a Divine light, by which she will see clearly what is best for her to do at all times.

Nevertheless, if the soul find herself carried away by too much eagerness and affection in any employment, she must temper and restrain her ardour by interrupting her work, and by resigning herself to be quite debarred from it, if such be God's will; and then having referred her employment to God, she may resume her task.

Indeed, whatever spiritual employment the soul may have, whensoever she may desire to hold converse with God, solitude is the proper place wherein to exercise it. There she may bewail her sins, exercise penance, meditate on the Holy Scriptures, prepare herself for her various employ-

* Fortitudinem meam ad Te custodiam (Ps. lviii. 10).

ments, and above all freely exercise spiritual prayer. Thither have most ancient saints and many holy bishops retired, for they knew that solitude is God's dwelling-place. And after enjoying a free, immediate, inexpressible communion with Him, they returned to the world fortified and enlightened to discharge the solicitous duties of their calling.

But absolute solitude, such as the ancient hermits practised, was never permitted until sufficient time had been spent in the exercises of the cœnobitical life, except a few souls miraculously called, like St. Anthony, St. Hilarion, St. Benedict and others. And for this reason: because a wonderful firmness of mind, confidence in God, and purity of soul are requisite in one who would oppose himself single-handed to the devil's assaults, which in solitude are specially furious. Moreover, a great measure of spiritual light is necessary to enable the soul to be her own director and to dispose of herself in all things.

CHAPTER VII

SILENCE

THE third general kind of mortification is silence, one of the most profitable mortifications in the spiritual life. It cuts off countless evils by which the spirit of devotion and recollection is apt to be dissipated; for the subjects of conversation are too often murmuring, detraction, vain distracting disputes, professions of friendship, news, gossip, and so forth. '*Upon the guard of the tongue*,' says the wise man, '*depends life and death*'; and '*Whosoever accounts himself religious and refrains not his tongue, that man's religion is vain*,' says St. James. Of infinite importance, then, is the ruling of this small member. And if this be so in the world, how much more in religion? Silence.

Our holy Father deals with his disciples as God dealt with a certain holy monk to whom He left no power of speech save for prayer only, the monk being absolutely dumb at other times. For in our holy Father's Rule there seems to be no permission given for voluntary or recreative conversation at any time, not even to superiors themselves. Enjoined by St. Benedict.

But in these days superiors have thought themselves obliged to relax much of this strict silence. They not only permit, but even appoint, set times for recreative conversation and mutual entertainment, out of consideration for the infirmity of our minds or bodies. Present practice.

As to whether there was real necessity for this relaxation

or not, I will not stop to inquire. But this is certain: as recently as in the days of St. Bernard the rigorous silence of the Rule was strictly observed; and in some communities of women, even in these days, almost like rigour is maintained. And if religious had truly good wills to seek God, they would find many things not very difficult which in their present temper of mind seem impossible, as regards silence, and also, perhaps, as regards diet.

Various recommendations.

It is very requisite, therefore, for an interior soul to observe at least that moderate, qualified silence which is required by the regulations of the community, not transgressing either in the appointed places or at the determinate times.

When charity and prudence require us to speak, we must be careful not to make the imperfections of others the subject of conversation, especially the imperfections of those towards whom we feel an aversion. We must also be particularly careful not to breed dislike between persons. Hence all secret tale-bearing, reporting or accusing others, must be carefully avoided as the ruin of Christian charity.

Nothing should ever be said or done merely for the sake of giving edification. And where recreative conversation is allowed, the most suitable topics are purely indifferent matters, such as are not likely to excite the passions or leave distracting images in the hearers' minds.

Recreations.

Some advice may be here given with regard to recreations in general. Although we said that mortification should extend itself to the whole soul, and that it must be continued to the end of one's life, we must not suppose that all recreation is prohibited. On the contrary, reason and the example of the holiest saints, famous for contemplation, show that it is profitable and at times necessary. The story told of St. John the Evangelist, the first doctor and example of contemplation, is a case in point. He was accustomed to recreate himself with a tame dove; and on one occasion,

being censured by a hunter who was passing by, for an action which seemed beneath his gravity and unbecoming in one who professed continual converse with God, St. John defended himself to the satisfaction of his critic in the following way: he showed him that as a bow would lose its strength if it were always bent, so the mind also would become utterly incapable of divine thoughts if no recreation were allowed it, considering the weakness of the body, which would be unable always to supply vigour to our actions, especially to such as are contrary to our natural inclination.

It is true that in our holy Rule there are no instructions about conventual recreations, an argument that there was none in those days. Indeed, our holy Father takes care to arrange for every hour in common. But nevertheless, after the principal meal of the day, he enjoined that the religious should retire each to his own cell, permitting them to refresh themselves by sleep, as was the custom in that climate, or in any other way they felt disposed, for there was no fixed employment for that time.

But as in these days we are thought to be incapable of so much solitude and attention to God in spirit, as has been said, superiors have ordained a certain time daily for recreative conversation, almost obliging each religious to be present at it.

Nor does this mitigation prejudice the duty of continual mortification, which is not to be interpreted too rigorously, for then our health, even in the strongest, would utterly break down. Besides, recreations are appointed that mortification may be exercised better and more fervently afterwards. Moreover, in recreation itself mortification may and should be prudently practised. We should not pour ourselves out on what is agreeable, but should keep a moderate watch over ourselves, and refer the satisfaction found in it to the good of the spirit.

With regard to such recreative conversations, we may

Conditions to be observed.

say in general that modesty and propriety of conduct should be observed. But undoubtedly more freedom must be allowed on these occasions than at other times, so that it goes not too far.

Among women there can scarcely be any recreation if the tongue be much stinted. Nor should their talk run on spiritual matters, for such conversation is far from recreative, and none but the experienced should discourse on such subjects. Indeed, to make spiritual things the ordinary subject of conversation, even between very experienced persons, is not expedient; to be prone to talk on such subjects often indicates pride, or a desire to guide the consciences of others, and it may be hurtful to both parties.

Melancholy dispositions.

Those who are naturally of a melancholy disposition should be particularly on their guard against melancholy. Their temper of mind will incline them to shun recreations and amusements. Hence they, or, rather, their superiors, should see that this dangerous humour is not nourished by a discontented retirement at a time when others are conversing together; and at other times they should be busied in employments that are not likely to foster solicitude. These dispositions, if prudently managed, may prove suitable for contemplation, as their thoughts are not easily dissipated. But if they are neglected and suffered to follow their own bent, they are likely to fall into terrible extravagances.

CHAPTER VIII

TRANQUILLITY OF MIND

Tranquillity of mind.

THE fourth general mortification is a constant peacefulness and tranquillity of mind, which maintains itself against all disquieting passions, grief, despair, and so forth. I will speak briefly and only in a general manner on this subject here, as in a later chapter I treat of the chief obstacle to peace of mind—fear and scrupulosity. There I shall point out the chief motives or means for procuring peace of mind and for restoring it when lost.

Without a reasonable degree of tranquillity of mind, the soul will be incapable of pursuing internal prayer. Hence she must use great care to preserve it; and when it is disturbed or lost, she must endeavour to regain it as soon as possible, till she can say, 'None shall take away my peace from me;' or, in the words of the Psalmist, My soul is always in my hands and in my control, and not enslaved by the corrupt passions of my nature.*

The subject or seat of this peace is the soul in all its faculties, both knowing and loving, in the superior or spiritual portion as in the inferior or sensitive. For not only may the affections of the will and the passions of our sensitive nature be disturbed, but also the reason and imagination. Hence a quietness and calmness must be secured in all. But the ways and means by which this

* 'Anima mea in manibus meis semper' (Ps. cviii. 109).

result is obtained are not the same for all the faculties, nor does it follow when the inferior faculties are in disorder that the disturbance is communicated to the superior. It does not always lie in our power to suppress wholly the instability and waywardness of the imagination, nor the unruliness of our sensitive nature, which often resists our superior reason. But we are able always by the grace of God to keep in repose the superior portion of the soul, to hinder it from attending to the suggestions of the imagination, or to deny consent to the impulses of our sensitive nature; this at least we should endeavour to do.

The soul and her sensitive nature.

The soul should not be discouraged or dejected at the opposition she finds in her sensitive nature. She must resist it as best she can, and be resigned and patient with herself as she would be with the waywardness of another, till, by God's blessing and a longer practice of prayer and mortification, she subdues her refractory nature to the obedience of reason and grace. In the meantime she may comfort herself with the knowledge that all merit and demerit lies in the superior will, and not in the sensitive nature considered in itself, apart from the will.

During the conflict between reason and sense or appetite, there may be a real tranquillity in the superior region of the soul, although the person be unable to perceive it. To timid natures, whenever the sensitive part is disturbed, it will seem as though the spiritual portion partook of the disorder. This fear and uncertainty is the ground of many scruples and of much unquietness even in the superior soul, when the person is not well instructed in the nature and subordination of the faculties and their operations.

How peace is procured.

However, the devout soul may conclude that there is calmness in the reason and resistance in the will even in the midst of the greatest disorder of the sensitive appetite, provided the outward members directed by reason and the superior will behave otherwise than the unruly appetite

suggests. For example, when a person is moved to anger, though he may find his imagination excited, a violent movement and heat in the region of the heart, and an aversion in his sensitive nature against the person, still, if he restrains himself from breaking forth into words of impatience and resists the thought of revenge, he may consider that he has not consented to the temptation, even though he could not hinder marks of passion from appearing in his eyes and countenance. This, however, supposes that he practises interior prayer and mortification.

When we seek to retain quietness in the midst of unquietness, we exercise an act of mortification very proper to the occasion. Every effort abates in some degree our impetuous nature and disposes for better and quieter recollections, which will procure for us a clearer light and more efficacious grace to resist our inferior nature afterwards. And, on the contrary, each act of immortification increases self-love, the root of all unquietness, causes a greater obscurity in the soul, and indisposes us to prayer.

To procure an habitual peacefulness of mind, we must be careful not to do any of our actions, even our duties, with impetuosity or inward haste, but with calmness and self-possession. Impetuosity or violence is usually the effect of self-love, and proceeds from our nature and not from the Divine Spirit, whose action is associated with stillness, calmness, and tranquillity. And let us not think that a calm performance of our duty indicates tepidity and want of fervour. On the contrary, such actions are of great virtue and solidity. The fervour to be desired is not a hasty eagerness and heat in our inferior nature, but a firm resolution in the will, courageously, yet without visible effort, breaking through every obstacle.

Every virtue exercised by 'custody of the heart.'

All the duties of mortification (and consequently the exercise of every virtue) may be reduced to the 'Custody of the heart.' It consists in not pouring out the affections

inordinately on creatures, nor admitting into our soul any inordinate attachment. It is a chariness over our interior, to keep it in as much quietness and repose as we can. In case of suffering it is patience; in time of fear and disquiet it is the practice of resignation: in effect it is abstraction, for it leads us not to meddle with what does not concern us; and in the things that do belong to us, it requires us to reserve our affections for God, to whom alone they are due. Also in speaking, hearing, and seeing, it leads us to be wary that no inordinate affections are carried into our soul. It is solitude; for though we be in company, we are as it were alone, having such a guard and care over our passions and affections. It is the passing over, the transcending all creatures to tend to God. It is the practice of love, obedience, humility, and resignation to God. It is the principal means for overcoming all temptations, for it will not suffer any temptation to enter the soul which is reserved as the dwelling-place of God and His love. It prevents us from seeking or desiring superfluities in meat, drink, clothing, and so forth. It checks the desire of superfluous knowledge which belongs not to us, or which is not necessary. It forbids childish, immortified complaints, expostulations, or anything by which we merely satisfy the inclinations of our corrupt nature. It restrains us from doing anything impetuously or with inward anxiety. It is called an interior silence, peace, or concord. A fuller explanation of 'Custody of the heart' will be found in the *Quiet of the Soul*, by Bonilla, of the Order of St. Francis.

Perfect peace the supreme state.

True peace of mind, when it has attained perfection, is the supreme state in an internal life, a stability in one and the same tenor, an immutability, indifference, insensibility as to ourselves and all creatures and events, by which we transcend all, living in God only, being concerned in nothing besides. The root of it is the perfection of divine charity and the destruction of self-love; for as long as

self-love is active in us it carries us to multiplicity, urging us to seek satisfaction in anything pleasing to our nature and appetites; and when these are crossed, or not fully satisfied, they become restless and unquiet. But when divine love alone reigns, it unites and concentrates all our thoughts and affections in one object only, viz., God—carrying all other affections in that one stream; so that, there being no diversity of aim or design, there necessarily follows perfect unity and peace. This is the state to which the soul aspires in the contemplative life. This state gained, the soul will be abundantly recompensed for all the sufferings and tediousness it is ever likely to meet on the way.

Yet this state, even in the perfect, does not entirely exempt the soul from all trouble in her inferior nature. But such trouble is of small moment; for the superior soul does not partake in it, but reigns in an upper region of light and peace, whence she looks down upon her sensitive nature as a thing divided from herself, in whose imperfections and disorders she is unconcerned She is, as it were, safely locked up from their reach in a strong tower, or she suppresses them at the first outbreak in virtue of that dominion which by long practice she has acquired over them. In this perfect peace (without the least rebellion in his sensitive nature) Adam lived during the days of his innocence. How far any other man has or may attain to it in this life is not for me to determine.

CHAPTER IX

THE MORTIFICATION OF THE AFFECTIONS

Mortification of affections.

It may be taken as a general principle that the whole soul with all its faculties must be subject to mortification, for the whole person is depraved and corrupted by sin. But, strictly speaking, it is only the affective part of the soul which is immediately mortified, and through it the intellectual faculties. For though ignorance is a defect of the soul, we do not say that knowledge or faith is a mortification, though it is truly a cure of that defect. But an inordinate love of unnecessary knowledge, or curiosity, is a deordination, and is a proper subject of mortification. The same may be said of the outward senses. It is not seeing, tasting, and so forth, that is to be mortified, but an inordinate affection for those things which delight the eyes, the taste, and the other senses. My intention, therefore, is to distinguish the several kinds of mortification according to the several passions or affections of the soul, whether sensitive or rational, and to refer the mortification of the several senses to them. But I shall not speak of each sense separately, for I should then have to repeat the same advice again in treating of the mortification of the affections.

Of the sensitive portion of the soul.

The mortification of the affections will be treated in the following order:

I. To begin with the sensitive portion of the soul; it contains four principal passions which comprehend all the others: (1) Love, which includes desire and joy, the

progress of love. The object of love may be persons or things: things may be material or spiritual. Hence many virtues are required to mortify (that is, to rectify) love, as poverty to mortify the love of riches; chastity, to mortify impure pleasure; temperance, the pleasure of taste; the love of God and spiritual things, to rectify an excessive (though innocent) love of friends; and so forth. But my purpose here is to treat only of that universal virtue which is the cure of all inordinate love—the love of God, and the love of our brethren in Him and for His sake; and also of purity of intention, which is substantially the same thing. And as temptations about taste adhere to even the most spiritual persons, assaulting them daily, I will add some instructions about our behaviour in reflection. (2) The next passion is anger. Some substitute hope for this; but the passion of anger will be more suitable to our present purpose, as hope may be referred to desire or love. The remedy for anger is the virtue of patience. (3) The third passion in our sensitive nature is fear. (4) And the fourth is sorrow. It is not necessary to divide these two, for among interior souls fear is the most tormenting passion, and causes excess of sorrow; so that the same remedies will serve for both. I shall, therefore, treat of scruples, their causes and remedies.

Of the superior portion of the soul.

II. Next, as to the superior portion of the soul: it has the affections of love, anger, fear, and sorrow, which in the inferior portion of the soul are called passions; and as they have the same objects, the affections will be comprised in the passions. The will has two notable disorders—pride or self-esteem, whose remedy is humility; and obstinacy and a tenacious attachment to liberty, to which is opposed obedience. As for the love of superfluous knowledge, it has been sufficiently dealt with in speaking of the studies of religious.*

* See Chapter VI. of this book.

Love. I will now treat of the passions or affections to be mortified, and the way it should be done, beginning with the sensitive passions and proceeding to the disorders of the will. First, then, of inordinate love for persons or things, and the remedy, which is divine charity.

CHAPTER X

THE MORTIFICATION OF LOVE

THE principle of all our actions, whether internal or external, is love only; that is, an internal complacence and inclination to an object for the goodness or beauty which is believed to be in it. If the object be absent, the first effect of love is a desire for it. If the object be present, the effect of love is joy, rest, fruition. Love also sets in motion all other passions, not only grief and anger, but even hatred itself. For why is a person angry, discontented, or displeased, but because something comes in the way, hindering him from what he loves? Hence all our labours and works are performed under the influence of love. So that according as love is regulated, and according as it is fixed upon a worthy or unworthy object, so is the whole person disposed. Hence the saying of St. Augustine: 'It is a good or ill love only that makes our actions and state to be good or evil.'

Root of the passions.

How wonderfully great, then, must be the depravity of our nature and of our actions both outward and inward; for we were created to love and enjoy God alone, and we love and seek principally ourselves! Our sensible affections are carried to nothing but what is pleasing to our sensitive nature; our spiritual affections to self-love, liberty, self-esteem, and self-will, and to those things which nourish these depraved affections. By these things we are turned

Depravity of love.

away from our last end and eternal happiness. How many thoughts that we naturally think, how many words that we speak, how many actions that we perform, carry us further from God, our last end and perfection!

The only remedy.

The only remedy for this universal disorder, a corruption which proceeds from the root of self-love, is to imprint a new divine principle in our hearts, by which we may be averted from the apparent happiness which self-love promises us in creatures, and be converted to our first and only end, God. This principle can be no other than divine love or charity shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. Charity is an universal cure for all our disorders, producing effects in us with respect to our true end, similar to those of self-love with respect to a false end. It moves and employs, when need be, all other passions—anger against our negligence and ingratitude; hatred against the devil and sin which hinder us from God, and so forth. It is also the root of all our good actions, giving us an inclination, desire, and tendency to union with God. Moreover, by it we regulate and direct all our actions to God. Hence St. Paul ascribes to charity the acts of all other virtues. '*Charity*,' says he, '*is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, is not puffed up, is not ambitious; rejoiceth with the truth, beareth all things, hopeth all things*,' etc.

Kinds of love.

In order that we may have a clear notion of the nature of true charity, the noblest kind of love, we must observe that love regards: (1) either a thing which we desire to possess, or something we love, as profit, honour, knowledge, and so forth; or (2) a person (ourselves or another) for whom we bear an affection, and to whom we wish any good thing. The former love is called the love of *desire*, the latter the love of *friendship*. The difference between them lies in this: when we love anything distinct from ourselves or our friend, our love does not rest in the thing but the person; for the thing is loved for the person's sake only, in

whom the love terminates, and for whom the thing is loved and sought. So when we seek pleasure, riches, and so forth, for ourselves, the love we have for them is simply self-love, for we love them for our own sake only, to give satisfaction to our natural desires. Indeed, when we love a person for the sake of the sensual pleasure that person affords, and not for virtue, it is really ourselves only whom we love; and we love that person not properly as a person, but as a thing pleasurable to ourselves. But by the love of friendship we love the person for the person's sake, and seek not our own good but the person's, for whose sake and greater good we are willing to neglect our own. Indeed, sometimes for the person's happiness and welfare we are ready to sacrifice our own happiness, or even our very life. Thus has friendship ever been described; and charity has been acknowledged by all to be the love of friendship to God, and for His sake to men or ourselves.

CHAPTER XI

THE NATURE OF DIVINE CHARITY

Seat of charity.

THE precious virtue of charity resides not in our sensitive nature; nor is it a painful longing of the soul, a longing which causes a beating of the heart, even though it should be what mystic writers call a languishing love; nor is it such as sensible affections usually are, a troublesome, unquiet passion. It is seated in the superior soul, and is a quiet, resolute determination of the superior will to seek God and perfect union with Him; a resolution on the part of the soul not to abandon her purpose for any distractions or difficulty however great. Indeed, it is often most excellent when the heart or inferior nature derives least pleasure from it, but feels, on the contrary, the greatest disgust and desolation. Such a resolution is grounded on the high esteem we have, through faith, of the infinite perfections of God, and of the innumerable obligations laid on us by Him. This causes an inflamed soul to despise all things for God, and to tend to Him with the resolution of possessing and enjoying Him, though it be with the loss of pleasure, riches, honour, and even life itself.

But such a generous love is not obtained suddenly. At first it is very imperfect and alloyed with self-interest and self-seeking, even in actions done for God. So that were not God ordinarily to cherish the soul during her imperfect

state with sensible consolations in the exercise of her love to Him, she would scarcely have the courage to proceed.

Fruits of charity.

The following are the characteristic acts and fruits of pure charity, or divine friendship. (1) To be united in affection to God, as our chief and only good, with whom in a sense we are one. (2) To take joy in His perfections, out of love for Him, congratulating with Him and exulting in that He is adored and glorified by angels and saints. (3) To will and acquiesce in the immutability of His perfections. (4) To desire, and as occasion offers, endeavour to convert sinners to God, that He may reign by love in all. (5) To be sorry for all offences against Him, our own and others. (6) To determine faithfully and unchangeably to serve Him out of pure love for Him. (7) To take joy in all things that please Him. (8) To accept all things at His hands indifferently, things displeasing as well as pleasing. (9) To be sorry for all that is contrary to His Holy Will. (10) To love all that belongs to Him merely for that reason. (11) To love all men for His sake, even our enemies and persecutors; moreover, to endeavour to show love to them more than to others, as special instruments who procure greater good for us than our friends. (12) To show all the honour we can to Him, and to do all the service we can to others for His sake. (13) To seek temporal advantages in nothing, but to please God only. (14) To imitate God in all His perfections as far as possible; especially to love others for His sake with the fulness of love with which He loved us, not seeking any personal advantage from it.*

* This point is of extreme importance. Mystic writers are unanimous in saying that we should love our neighbour principally for God's sake, because it is His will; in other words, our love of our neighbour should proceed principally from our love of God. Thus, St. Teresa writes in reference to the motive with which acts of charity should be performed by one sister towards another: The act of charity should be done 'not so much for *her* sake as because our Lord wishes

(15) To serve Him as best we can, yet to rejoice that He is served more perfectly by others. (16) To serve and love God only in our superiors, equals, and inferiors. (17) To resolve to accept no contentment except in God; no happiness but in Him; nor to rest with affection in His gifts but only in Himself. (18) To set no bounds to our love, but to endeavour to love Him daily better and better. (19) To desire to suffer for Him here, contenting ourselves with the hope of enjoying Him hereafter. (20) To hate ourselves, our corrupt nature, our insensibility to His goodness, with perfect hatred, never growing weary of persecuting and

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it.' And again: 'It is very important for us diligently to observe how we proceed in this matter; for if we endeavour perfectly to acquire the love of our neighbour, we shall have done everything; because, as our nature is corrupt and evil, unless our love come from the root (which is the love of God), we shall never perfectly possess the love of our neighbour.' St. Catherine of Siena is equally emphatic. She says: 'The reason why God's servants love their fellow-creatures so much is because they see how much Christ loves them, and it is one of the properties of love to love what is loved by the person we love.'

Though love of our neighbour should proceed from our love of God, this love is not a substitute for natural affection, nor does it destroy natural affection. St. Bernard goes so far as to say that 'love begins in the flesh and ends in the spirit'; that we first love with natural affection and then purify it by an infusion, as it were, of divine love. But, be this as it may, it seems quite certain that the love of God neither destroys, nor even weakens natural affection in His saints. Thus writes St. Teresa: 'Think not that if my father or brother should die I must conform myself to God's will in such a way as not to feel their death.' St. Bernard, too, when giving utterance to his pent-up grief for the death of his brother, justifies himself thus: 'I have not the insensibility of a stone, nor is my flesh of bronze. I have feeling, assuredly, and sharp pain, and my trouble is ever in my sight. He who has stricken me will not be able to accuse me of hardness and want of sensibility. I have confessed my great affliction and denied it not. Someone has called this carnal; I do not deny that it is human, just as I do not deny that I am a man. If that does not suffice, then I shall not deny that it is carnal. Is it reasonable to declare that I

mortifying ourselves. (21) To love Him in His commands as in His rewards. (22) To be content in any act of severity exercised by Him on us. (23) Never to cease from praying that God will show us the defects in our love, and increase daily its purity and fervour. (24) In loving Him, to transcend all thought of ourselves and of our own happiness. These are marks and fruits of pure charity; but, alas! where shall we find a soul that can display them all? However, we must aspire to as many of them as may be, and be resigned in our imperfections, since it is God's permission.

Among the most profitable ways of expressing our love

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call in question the sentence because I feel the penalty keenly? To feel is human, but to repine would be impious. It is human, I repeat, and unavoidable, that we should not be indifferent to those who are our friends, that we should enjoy their presence, and lament its being taken from us.'

Indeed, divine love, so far from weakening natural affection, seems rather to strengthen it, to deepen it, to widen it, and to purify it. Divine love comes to the aid, as it were, of natural affection, and, permeating it, lifts it up from the mire, and places it upon a higher plane, almost divine. These effects are not wrought all at once, but gradually, by a process of development, as divine love grows and takes possession of the soul. As an example of the intense natural affection of the saints, we may take St. Elizabeth of Hungary. Her biographer tells us that on one occasion she swooned away on hearing by accident that her husband had engaged to join the Crusades. And so great was her love for him that she was accustomed to use all her ingenuity to be with him as much as possible. Her biographer also remarks that she and her husband loved one another 'beyond all belief.' Though St. Elizabeth's love of her husband was so intense, it was not by any means straitened or narrow, but through the widening influence of divine love, it extended to all who were in need—to the sick, the dying, the poor, the suffering. She would follow even the humblest of her subjects to the grave, or strip the sheets from her bed to wrap the dead. The same may be said of St. Jane Frances de Chantal. Though she was a nun, and foundress of a religious congregation, she did not cease to entertain the strongest affection for her children; and her grief at losing them, and her sympathy for them when they lost a

to God are the following: (1) To depend on Him altogether with confidence for our temporal subsistence and spiritual progress, not relying on our own care or efforts, but casting our care on Him, living a life of faith. (2) To have hearts not only obedient to His commands, but inwardly delighting in them, as most delicious and necessary meat and drink, however contrary to our corrupt nature. (3) To practise perfect resignation to His will in all events. These are secure testimonies of our love, because they exclude self-interest; whereas affective love is often mingled with natural pleasure and self-love.

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husband or child, went so far, at least on one occasion, as to endanger her life.

Indeed, there is much evidence which tends to show that as the saints grow in the love of God, so they increase in tenderness of heart and sensibility. It is not easy to account for this. Perhaps the most satisfactory explanation is that the love of God is not really opposed to the love of others, but to the love of self. The love of self renders the heart hard and narrow, causes the affections to be unstable, and disposes us readily to take offence. Moreover, self-love ever tends to subject the love of others to itself, to regard them as things pleasurable to self, and to love them so long only as they are pleasing to self; and all this is diametrically opposed to the true love of others. Now, it is just this love of self against which divine love is directed. As divine love increases, so does the love of self diminish, and thus the greatest obstacle of true love of others is gradually removed. And as self-love decreases the heart becomes more tender and enlarged; and the affections purified, strengthened, animated with the love of God, readily expand towards all that God loves, towards all God's creatures, seeking, desiring only their happiness and their good, and without thought of personal gain.

Whether this be the true solution or not, the fact remains that a large proportion of the saints have not found that the exercise of their natural affections has prevented them from attaining to a high degree of contemplation and union with God, but as they grew in the love of God, so did their affections become more and more purified, spiritualized, and subject to its controlling influence.

It should be noted, however, that Father Baker inclines to the school of extreme detachment represented by St. John of the Cross.

Though this secure practice of love, by self-denial and renunciation of self-love and self-will, be full of difficulty at the beginning, by custom it will become less difficult, and in the end delightful. For certain it is that Christ's yoke, being constantly borne, becomes sweet and easy. Self-abnegation the safest course.

The smallest act of love and service to God performed with perfect self-abnegation is more acceptable and precious in His sight than the working of a thousand miracles or the conversion of nations, if in these are mixed natural interests.

In a word, the difference between heaven and hell lies in this: that hell is full of nothing but self-love and self-seeking, whereas not the least degree of either is to be found in heaven—nothing but to fulfil God's will and to seek His glory. This is the happiness, the blessedness of the saints and angels, and in no other way can they love themselves but by loving God alone. Difference between heaven and hell.

CHAPTER XII

PURITY OF INTENTION

Of purity of intention.

We will now consider charity under another aspect, as the director of our actions. From this point of view it is called purity of intention, by which we refer all that we do and suffer to the love and glory of God, which is of all conditions the most necessary. For God rewards no deeds but such as are done, at least virtually, for His sake. Hence whatever end we propose to ourselves, which is not subordinate to this, makes the action so far unacceptable to God.

God the end of actions.

I say subordinate, for without doubt there are and must be other immediate ends and intentions of many of our actions, as the temporal or spiritual good of ourselves or others; but we must not rest in these inferior ends, but refer all finally to God. So our Saviour commanded St. Peter to give tribute money, lest the Jews be offended.

A pure and a right intention.

Harphius makes a distinction between a pure and a right intention. The latter he attributes to good active souls, who substantially desire to seek God's glory in all things; but for want of practice of pure spiritual prayer, they mix many undiscovered natural designs in their good actions, which so far diminish their value. But the intention of perfect contemplative souls he calls a simple or pure intention, because it proceeds from a purified interior.

To obtain this pure and simple intention, I will en-

deavour, according to my small experience and the light God has given me, to set forth the best method in the following instructions, which belong properly to souls pursuing a contemplative life. How to acquire purity of intention.

1. Let the devout soul leading an interior life endeavour to apprehend by reading, conferring, considering and praying, what is true and perfect love of God, and in what it consists.

2. Having done this, by the grace of God let her seriously engage herself, not, indeed, by vow, but by a strong resolution, to labour to attain to this love of God; and let her do this purely for God's sake and glory, and not for her own natural interests. Such should be her intention in all she does and suffers.

3. As this love is obtained by means of prayer and mortification only, let her resolve to pursue them according to these directions to the end of her life, not resting voluntarily in any degree of love, but ever making progress without limit. Let her daily put in practice her resolution, and renew it again and again when she grows remiss.

4. Lastly, in the discharge of these duties and of her employments, she should try to have at least a virtual intention of directing them to God, making Him the final end of all. This intention she should often actually renew; for when God is in truth the real end of her actions, He communicates to them a supernatural character and a kind of divinity which greatly enhance their value.

It being certain that this purity of intention can be obtained by the practice of interior prayer only, how far from perfection are souls who altogether neglect it? Nor will an occasional offering of our actions to God suffice to establish a habit of purity without constant set exercises of prayer and mortification. The virtue which such occasional oblations have is to diminish the impurity of those parti- Practice of interior prayer necessary.

cular actions, and to increase slightly the habit of divine love in the soul. The virtue of such acts, however, should be measured according to the normal state of the soul.

Daily offering of actions and sufferings.

If the interior soul be accustomed to offer occasionally her daily actions, I should advise her not to multiply the acts too frequently, so as to hurt her head or distract her imagination, or hinder necessary liberty of spirit. Nor let them hinder her from more perfect and profitable up-liftings of the spirit to God, or aspirations, if invited by God, or if she find a relish in them.

It is unquestionable that to offer our sufferings to God is far more profitable than to offer works which have in them nothing contrary to our natural inclination, and the value of such sufferings will be much increased by the exercise of constant prayer.

Other advices.

It is far easier for an imperfect soul to exercise purity of intention in actions of obligation, in obedience to a law or command of superiors, than in those left to choice. It would be well, therefore, to have her ordinary actions prescribed for her by her spiritual director, or to arrange them herself after careful consideration, but not so as to prejudice due liberty of spirit.

In every recollection the soul expressly, or at least virtually, renews her principal purpose of tending in all her actions, external and internal, to the perfect love of God. Then she discovers and corrects such defects or transgressions against this purpose as have occurred at other times. Our recollections are the fountain whence our works derive an increase of merit and virtue; in them purity of intention is perfectly exercised.

The intention of active and contemplative souls compared.

The actions and sufferings of a contemplative soul, though often accompanied by much repugnance in her interior nature, have more purity of intention and merit than the voluntary actions of active souls, or of those who do not constantly pursue internal prayer, although the

actions of these souls seem to be done with greater alacrity and facility, and to the soul herself appear to proceed from charity, and may cause admiration in the eyes of beholders. The reason of this is that the actions of the former are done purely out of a Divine inspiration, and in great simplicity and unity, their view of God not being obscured and hindered by the images accompanying such actions. Whereas active souls contemplate multiplicity immediately, even in prayer itself they are not without multiplicity, though they direct it more to one than in actions out of prayer.*

As purity of intention consists in regarding God with

* Father Baker elsewhere (in his treatise *Variety of Spirits in Religion*) distinguishes contemplatives into two classes, viz., into 'pure contemplatives' and 'imperfect contemplatives.' Of the latter he says: 'The imperfect contemplative spirit is one who commonly in his business is full of multiplicity. However, when the businesses are laid aside, and he betakes himself to his recollection, at the season for it, he, having, as it were, a natural and habitual propensity towards God and His immediate presence, with a loathing, or at least a neglect or disesteem of all creatures, doth easily surmount all multiplicity of images that could be occasioned by his precedent employments, whereon the soul had never fixed her love; for she was not, nor could be, satisfied or much delighted with them; and therefore he easily getteth an unity and simplicity of soul, and, overcoming multiplicity, which is distraction, he easily findeth, and treateth with, the unity and simplicity of God, which immediately appeareth unto him.' Further on in the same treatise he says that which is common to contemplatives, both perfect and imperfect, and which is their distinguishing characteristic, is that 'they immediately, and without the means of images or creatures, apply themselves to God, or to seek union with Him by the powers of their soul, especially by the most noble power of it, called the will.' Both perfect and imperfect contemplatives are called by Father Baker souls 'of the first rank.' Active spirits he calls souls 'of the second rank.' Of the latter in the same treatise he says: 'The mere naturally active good spirit remains almost ever, and at all seasons, in the case of Martha, a good case and pleasing to God; but not the best, by the testimony even of our Saviour Himself.'

simplicity, that is, without mixture of images or affections for creatures, it is very necessary for interior souls to use much care and discretion not to engage unnecessarily in distracting employments.

Even perfect souls often experience less purity of intention in things agreeable than in such as are mortifying. It is best, therefore, to frame an actual intention in the former cases.

The repugnance which contemplative souls often find in the discharge of external employments, arises not so much from an unwillingness to obey, as reluctance to leave their internal solitude and abstraction; still such reluctance in their inferior nature is easily subdued, at least so far as it hinders obedience and duty.

True purity of intention is best discerned in the beginning of an action. Ordinarily, we commence our external work out of a sudden natural impulse and predilection. Observing the bad beginning, we seek to rectify it by a good intention, to seek purely the glory of God; but we only faintly renounce our natural interests. This, indeed, is better than to continue in the motives with which we began. But no actions are perfectly pure and meritorious but such as have for their first principle a Divine light and impulse, and are continued in virtue of the same.

Hence, a certain holy hermit was accustomed before he began any work to pause a little, like one whose mind was preoccupied, and being asked why he did so, he answered: 'All our actions as such are worth nothing. Like a rough unshapen piece of timber, they have no gracefulness in them, unless we adorn and gild them over with a pure intention, directing them to the love and glory of God; or, as one who shoots at a mark first carefully fixes his eye on it, otherwise he will shoot at random, so do I fix my eye on God Who is to be our only mark. For this reason,

before I begin any work, I seriously offer it to God, begging His assistance.'

Active souls in almost all their actions of moment may profitably frame an actual intention; but contemplative souls, who are habitually united to God, would gain nothing by the practice. The frequent renewal of an actual intention would cause them too much distraction.

To conclude. However difficult and contrary to our nature may be the attainment of purity of intention—for by it the very soul of our corrupt nature, self-love, is rooted out—yet there can be no doubt that it is absolutely necessary in an interior life. And when we bear in mind God's promise that He will not be wanting to our efforts, the devout soul will find it neither impossible nor perhaps so difficult as at first appeared, if she will act with resolution. To quicken and fortify her resolution, I will conclude this chapter with those incisive words of Harphius: 'Oh, what great and hidden deceits of our corrupt nature will appear and be disclosed (and severely punished) after this life, because souls have not been purified and made deiform in their intentions!' God Almighty give us grace to discover and reform now this perilous, secret self-seeking of our nature, to the glory of His holy name! Amen.

CHAPTER XIII

TEMPERANCE IN REFECTION

Temperance in refection.

THE love of God is an adequate remedy against all inordinate affections. I should, therefore, have contented myself with treating about divine charity, were it not that refection and the pleasure felt in meat and drink play a considerable part in the spiritual life. It therefore calls for special notice. It is a temptation which unavoidably accompanies us through life, as food (the occasion of it) is absolutely necessary. Besides, scarcely any temptation is more artful. It so cloaks itself under the plea of necessity that even perfect souls who have abandoned all other occasions of sin are sometimes surprised and in a measure overcome by it, being unable to distinguish excess from necessity. Hence St. Augustine, not less passionately than elegantly, complains in his *Confessions* (lib. x., c. 13) of the subtlety and vexatiousness of this temptation. The passage, however, being well known and obvious, need not be set down here.

Sensual and natural appetite distinguished.

The natural appetite craves for food merely for the sustentation of the body; the sensual appetite for pleasure, considering not the benefit of soul or body, nor the seasonableness of the time, nor other requisite circumstances. But the rational appetite or will directed by grace, though it cannot hinder the sensual nature from

taking pleasure in food, yet desires and receives it from a necessary care of the body, for the good of the soul according to the will and pleasure of God, and in such order and measure as reason, and not sensual appetite, dictates. So that if the rational will gives way to the inordinate desires of the sensual appetite, so far a fault is committed; and the fault must be imputed not to the sensual appetite, but to the superior soul whose office or duty is to restrain and bridle sense.

Sensual appetite a constant temptation.

As this temptation is the last to be mastered, so is it the first which should be attacked. No virtue is attained, says Cassian, till the soul has acquired some mastery over gluttony. Much is accomplished in this direction when we have subdued habitual affection to eating and drinking, especially to banquets which bring many inconveniences to interior souls, as loss of time, peril of intemperance or misconduct, hurtful distractions, indisposition to prayer, and many sins of the tongue.

Defects in refection.

Imperfect souls should be on their guard against the following defects in eating and drinking: (1) Taking too much. (2) Eating too hastily or out of the proper time. (3) Eating delicately. (4) Studiously providing agreeable food. The soul that has attained to some measure of mortification may sometimes offend against the first two points, but rarely does she fail in the other qualities.

Signs of detachment in refection.

The following are signs by which the soul may know whether she is detached from the pleasures of sense: (1) If the exercises of the spirit be her chief delight, and if she pursue them diligently. (2) If she seek not after nor willingly attend banquets and feastings. (3) If she entertain not herself with the thought of such things, nor talk of them with zest. (4) If she take food only as a necessity and duty. (5) If she be content to be deprived of all that might please her taste, were such God's will.

Feastings to be avoided.

In case civility shall oblige a spiritual person to be present at a banquet, he will do well to watch well over himself at the beginning. And this he may easily do, as the others being eagerly engaged on their food will be little disposed to notice him. And to pass the time, which is usually long, let him choose such food as is light and easy of digestion. In so doing he will avoid singularity, and in effect eat but little. In a word, let him go with a mind to be abstemious, and let him retain it.

Inconvenience of refection.

There is this unavoidable misery about eating and drinking, however temperately it be done, that the soul is forced for some time after to descend from the spiritual heights she attained to by virtue of her preceding recollection. She is so weighed down by the body during the process of assimilation, that if she before possessed an experimental perception that God is all and herself nothing, now she enjoys no spiritual perception beyond what the light of faith affords.

But the soul should not reduce the requisite quantity of food for her prayer's sake, for that would do more harm than good to the spirit by enfeebling the body too much. Nor should she consider that she has indulged to excess because she finds some heaviness and perhaps some discomfort after food. This may proceed from that debility which ordinarily attends a spiritual life; as St. Hildegarde observes, the love of God does not usually dwell in robust bodies.

It is not our petty failings through frailty and ignorance, much less the imaginary failings suggested by scrupulousness, that averts God from us or hinders our union with Him. Such defects may be atoned for at our next recollection, or perhaps sooner. The prejudicial defects are those which proceed from a settled affection for pleasure-stirring objects.

To correct the vice of eagerness in eating, Abbot Isaac

advised his monks to stretch forth their hands for meat or drink with a certain mental unwillingness. Further advice.

Let each content himself with what God provides for him through his superiors, accounting it to be better for him (however mean or coarse) than that which can be procured only with solicitude and impatience. Nor should he excuse his impatience on the plea that he must take care of the body for the sake of the spirit. He will do far more harm to the soul by such solicitude and impatience than he can do good by his anxiety.

We have, indeed, small reason to love the body. One way or another it is the cause of nearly all our sins. To cherish it and to satisfy its inordinate cravings is to make provision for sin. Surely our corrupt nature sufficiently inclines us in that direction already! The body an enemy.

As food gives rise to many defects and hindrances to spiritual progress, so the devout soul may, on the contrary, turn the necessity of food to her spiritual profit. It obliges her to watch and pray lest she be overcome by temptation. It gives occasion to exercise patience, when she lacks what she would wish to have, and also temperance in the use of food. Again, the frequent excess beyond what is necessary affords abundant matter for the exercise of humility. Moreover, by means of refection the soul obtains a short interval of rest, and diverts her mind from spiritual things; this should enable her to work afterwards with more diligence and intensity. Benefits of food.

A perfect soul, says St. Gregory, scarcely notices the secret snares or veiled temptations of the sensual appetite which urges us to take more than necessity or obedience requires. And the light by which such dangers are avoided is derived from internal prayer only. Moreover, till the soul is raised by prayer above her sensual appetite, she will not have the strength to resist the inordinate desires which she detects. Souls that have arrived at perfect Subtlety of these temptations.

contemplation oppose such desires not so much by directly combating against them as by neglecting and forgetting the body. Owing only to the decay of true contemplative prayer have spiritual directors found it necessary to multiply minute rules about diet and other observances of our holy Rule. Yet even these can do little to produce solid virtue in the soul without spiritual prayer.

The desire of perfect souls.

If a perfectly spiritual soul might have her wish, she would willingly be liberated from pleasure in eating and drinking, considering her daily temptations. Hence she is forced to cry out with David: O Lord, deliver me from these my bodily necessities.* Were it not for them, she might, like an angel, be ever in contemplation, and enjoy a never-failing light which now is obscured by the fumes even of the most temperate repast. Besides, every passion is in some degree quickened and strengthened by refection. Such souls may truly be said to have a distaste for food. The best way besides prayer to procure this distaste and to escape the mischief which may come of refection, will be not only to mortify the sensual appetite during meals, but having in mind the great temptations which then assail us, to go to meals with a kind of unwillingness and fear.

Some sublime instances.

A wonderful mortification with regard to food is mentioned by Harphius of a holy brother, Roger, of the Order of St. Francis. This brother, by elevating the powers of his soul and suspending them in God, lost during meals the perception of the sense of taste. If on an occasion he found himself unable to elevate his soul, he refrained from eating anything that would afford him pleasure. But this practice belongs only to perfect souls: it would be hurtful and even dangerous for imperfect souls to attempt it, unless they are directed to do so by an unmistakable inspiration of God.

The soul that practises internal prayer may content

* 'De necessitatibus meis, libera me' (Ps. xxiv. 17).

herself with moderate attention to the reading during meals. The same may be said of the Office which is recited in some communities immediately after dinner. Too close attention and recollection at such times might easily be prejudicial to the health. The soul may account it a time of desolation, to which, indeed, it bears some likeness. Public reading.

Lastly, the question of sleep is not unworthy the care of a spiritual person. For certainly a full repast does not immerse the soul so deeply in her sensitive nature, or so indispose her for spiritual exercises, as a long and profound sleep. Even a perfect soul will be unable without much difficulty to raise herself out of it into the exercises of the spirit. Sleep.

For imperfect souls to be deprived of a requisite amount of sleep is likely to prove prejudicial; but it is good to interrupt it. It is also of use to go to bed with a desire to be up early.

If sleep visits us not, it will be imprudent to lie in a negligent, idle frame of mind, for idle and even bad thoughts are apt to present themselves at such times. But I would not recommend the soul to have recourse to a serious recollection or exercises of devotion, as this is likely to destroy all hope of sleep and spoil the next day's recollection. If they are merely idle thoughts which wander unsettled through the mind, it were best to neglect them. But if they are sinful imaginations, let the soul quietly turn away from them and lift the mind gently up to God from time to time, or let her say her beads, or repeat some familiar prayer, without close attention. This will usually prove sufficient; but more care and attention is requisite for sinful than for idle or vain thoughts.

In the case of perfect souls it is otherwise. Their prayer is so pure and habitual that it is almost as natural as breathing, and is performed without exciting the mind or revolving images in the imagination. Hence it will do little to hinder their sleep.

CHAPTER XIV

PATIENCE

Mortification of anger.

THE next passion to be mortified is anger. No one should willingly suffer anger to rise within him, or deliberately yield to trouble of mind about health, fortune, life, or anything that concerns his body, even under the pretext of his soul's good. Such an one really esteems these things more than the solid good of his soul; for in so far as anger obtains an ascendancy over him, he loses that dominion which his soul should have over all things, and he dethrones reason. Hence our Saviour says: '*By patience you shall keep possession of your souls*,' implying that by impatience we lose that possession; and what greater loss could we have? This truth is expressed in almost every language. Thus we say when a person is very angry, that he is 'beside himself.'

Impatience dealt with here.

However, it is not my purpose to speak here of those outbreaks of anger too common in the world, and which, let us hope, are unknown among religious souls, but only of those lesser acts of impatience and irresignation, or of warm impetuosity, which sometimes befall devout souls, disturbing their peace of mind, increasing the habit of self-love, and despoiling their best actions of merit.

We have said that our love is due to God alone, or to others in reference to God. Now, love is the root and moving force of all the other passions and affections of the

soul. Consequently our aversion, displeasure, or impatience should be directed against those things only that are directly contrary to God. But persons, actions, sufferings which are not sinful are not contrary to God. Hence all movement of passion against persons or against mishaps that befall us from any cause is sinful in proportion to the violence or intensity of the passion.

Not even the most solitary person can complain of the want of opportunity to exercise patience. Besides the crosses coming from without by God's providence, the devout soul aspiring to perfection must observe the smallest feeling of irritation which will arise sometimes against the humblest creature or even against inanimate things. There are also movements of the will so secret and subtle that they are unaccompanied by any perceptible feeling and can hardly be expressed; even these will perfect souls, illuminated by a light proceeding from prayer, detect and contradict. No one is altogether free from these disorders; even the quietest nature will be sensible of uneven impulses or feelings which ought to be mortified.

There is as much difference, says Cassian, between a perfect interior soul and an imperfect one as there is between a clear-sighted man and one who is near-sighted. A near-sighted man sees only the principal features in a room—chairs, tables, and so forth—but fails to distinguish the colour, distance, and order of smaller objects, all of which is plainly seen by a clear-sighted man. So in regard of our inward defects. An imperfect soul observes and amends grosser imperfections only. Then she thinks that she has arrived at great perfection; but, alas! there remains still a multitude of imperfections visible to eyes enlightened by supernatural grace, which is to be obtained only by pure internal prayer. By the light of this grace the soul will discover how strongly rooted the passions are, and how souls deceive themselves who in prosperity abandon them-

selves to joy, as if nothing could ever diminish it; or yield to grief in time of sorrow as if it would never end. We find examples of this in Suso, and the monk cured of great inward affliction by St. Bernard; also in David, who said of himself: Being in an excess of mind through Divine consolations, I said I shall never be moved.* But he found presently his mistake, for he added: Thou didst only turn away Thy face from me, and presently I became troubled.

Patience to be exercised at all times.

Indeed, spiritual persons should at all times exercise patience, even in time of joy, anticipating a change. A change is perhaps to be desired, for the way of perfection is a way of continual risings and fallings, to all of which the soul should be indifferent, or, rather, she should account her abode in the valley more secure than on the mountain.

Acquired by exercise of indifference.

All movement of anger and aversion is in proportion to our self-love. And we cannot reckon self-love to be subdued till we are indifferent to all creatures, actions, or sufferings as such. I say as such, for if they be of obligation, we must not be indifferent about them, but should incline our hearts to the obligation, for that is but to love God from whom our obligations proceed. Yet if a task of obligation be naturally agreeable to us, we must take heed we tie not our hearts to it on that account. This fault is disclosed by our doing such works with more than usual diligence, haste, and impetuosity. In such a case imperfect souls should perform the work with as many pauses and with as much mortification as the work will permit. If it require haste, let them at least maintain internal resignation and indifference in the superior will. On the other hand, if it be something they dislike, the more cheerfully and speedily they perform it the more perfectly will it be done, provided the speed does not arise from the desire to curry favour, or to have done with the task.

* 'Ego dixi in excessu meo,' etc. (Ps. xxix. 7, 8).

The soul aspiring to perfection in a contemplative life should not be satisfied with patience and indifference in crosses which cannot be avoided; she should not even wish to rid herself of them. She will do well to keep them, and, as it were, linger over them, provided she has strength to do so.

A spiritual person living a life of perfect abstraction may be in need of devising imaginary difficulties to exercise patience. He may test himself by calling to mind some injury he has received or by feigning one, and then let him observe whether anger be stirred in him, and to what extent.

Patience towards God easier than towards men.

Injuries, persecutions, and so forth, that we suffer from men are generally more bitter than afflictions from God, though these may be greater in themselves as sickness or losses; perhaps because men are our equals, and we know not their secret intentions, but we suspect the worst. Besides, we know that God is omnipotent, that He has supreme dominion over us, and that His goodness is infinite; so that in all His dealings, however perplexing, we assure ourselves that He means to do us good. And as for the afflictions we bring on ourselves through imprudence or in other ways, we are but little moved by them to impatience, though often to secret shame, because we are naturally prone to excuse our misdeeds, and are well assured of our good intentions towards ourselves.

Seven degrees of patience.

The first degree of patience is to have a serious desire for it; and we should maintain our patience under provocation at least in the superior will. If this cannot be done at first, then let it be done as soon as possible, before the sun goes down or at the next recollection. At least we must restrain the tongue and members from expressing impatience, even if we cannot prevent sour looks. A person who cannot abstain from deliberate angry speech, or from passionate actions, has not yet attained to the lowest degree of patience.

The second degree is to endeavour to guard the heart, not suffering contradiction or annoyance to enter in, or to move us to anger. This may be done by regarding the provocation as not worthy of consideration, or, rather, as an occasion from which we may reap much good.

The third is to use the mildest words and kindliest looks we can towards the person provoking us; and not only to desire, but to endeavour to do him good and to place him under obligations.

The fourth is to imitate the prophet David, who said: My soul expected scornful upraiding and affliction.* This degree does not require us to seek mortifications, but only not to be solicitous about avoiding them. But God often inspires His servants with a desire for occasions to exercise patience, and sometimes to seek for them. Thus St. Syncletica begged St. Athanasius to procure her a situation as attendant on a cross, ill-natured person; and by suffering all this person's insupportable humours with patience and joy, she attained to great perfection.

The fifth degree appears in bearing with peace and resignation internal crosses and aridities, which are far more painful than external ones; especially the great desolation sent by God to purify perfect souls. Of this we shall speak in the following book.

Sixthly, a great addition to the weight of these internal crosses, and consequently to the demand on patience, is made when they are accompanied by external afflictions. This happened to our Lord on the cross, when to the terrible torments of the body was added internal desolation.

The seventh and supreme degree of patience is to suffer all these things not only with tranquillity but with joy. This degree is more than human. It is a supernatural gift of God, by which not only the superior will receives and embraces things most contrary to its nature, but even

* 'Improperium expectavit cor meum et miseriam' (Ps. lxviii. 21).

the inferior nature makes no resistance, though the afflictions came upon it suddenly and without preparation. I know not whether any creature in this life, except our Blessed Lady, has ever arrived at so high a degree of perfection as to be altogether impassible.

Curious examples of patience.

St. John Climacus gives two instances of patience which seem rather extravagant. The first is of a monk who received an injury without being moved in the least to anger; but being anxious to conceal his patience, he made great complaints to his brethren, pretending great indignation. The other is that of a humble soul who detested ambition, yet pretended an impatient desire for offices of authority, and great disappointment when they were refused. But, adds the author, we must take heed lest in imitating such practices we come rather to deceive ourselves than the devil or others.

Patience acquired by pure prayer.

True patience can be acquired by pure internal prayer only. Other means apart from it will produce little more than a philosophical mortification mixed with undiscovered natural interests. But by prayer joined with the exercise of patience the very soul itself will be rectified, and in time will arrive at an established peace which nothing will be able to ruffle—scarcely could the soul herself disturb it. Amendment will be as imperceptible as is progress in prayer. But after a time we shall, almost unawares, become sensible of it. And perfect souls grow in this virtue, not so much by directly combating against any passion or irritation, as by transcending all created things, elevating the spirit and, as it were, drowning it in God.

CHAPTER XV

SCRUPULOSITY IN GENERAL

Fear most disquieting.

THE next passion to be mortified is fear, to which we shall add grief, not as if they were the same, but because in interior souls grief ordinarily proceeds from fear and scruples, rather than from loss of goods, friends, and other similar causes.

More disquieting than grief.

Fear seems of all passions to be the most disquieting. In a sense, grief may be said to intensify fear, for grief supposes the evil to be present, while fear considers it in futurity; and a present evil as such is worse than one which is only expected. But experience shows that fear of an unknown evil is more disturbing than its presence; for the evil is apprehended as the imagination represents it, and this is usually as something far greater than it is in reality. Moreover, the fear of this impending evil sets the understanding to work, either to devise means of avoiding the evil, or, if this seems impossible, to discover fresh motives for unquietness and anxiety. All this trouble of mind arises from uncertainty about the evil, how great it may be, or when it may befall us.

What scrupulosity is.

The special kind of fear of which we are now treating is one to which sensitive, devout souls (especially women) who pursue a contemplative life are particularly liable. It is usually called scrupulousness. It is a mixed passion, and is most opposed to that peace of mind which is so

necessary in the spiritual life. It seems to be envenomed with the anxiety and inward torments of all other passions. It is in constant dread of sin and hell. It assumes to itself all the bitterness to be found in fear, despair, ineffectual desires, uncertainty of judgment, and so forth, penetrating the mind and spirit, obscuring and troubling the understanding, and torturing the will by plucking it in opposite directions almost simultaneously. In a word, it causes the most hopeless disorder that a devout soul is capable of, and, if obstinately cherished, it may end in the overthrow of reason, or, worse still, in a desperate abandonment of virtue and piety. Even when the disorder does not reach to such lengths, it at least causes most disquieting images, which penetrate so deeply and adhere so closely, that it is destructive of recollected prayer; so that the utmost care and prudence should be exercised to prevent scrupulousness, or to expel it when it has effected a lodgment.

And now I will offer to souls that are tortured on this rack the best advice at my disposal, according to the light which God has afforded me. And if the scrupulous soul will have the courage to follow it, I doubt not, by God's help, she will be preserved from the dangerous effect of that passion. This subject will be treated fully, because scrupulousness is only too common among souls of excellent dispositions.

Benefit of a tender conscience.

To encourage these scrupulous souls to use the advice proper for them, let them note that the very disposition, a tender fearfulness of offending God, which renders them liable to this passion, is of special advantage to enable them to make rapid progress in internal ways and to attain purity of heart, the immediate disposition to contemplation, if only they can avoid this mischievous disorder. This is the only snare the devil has to hinder their progress. He takes advantage of their sensitive fear of sin to fill their minds with a multitude of unquiet apprehensions. More-

over, scrupulousness is far from being an effectual remedy, as they seem to imagine, of their imperfections; it only renders contemplation impossible of attainment. And God grant that nothing worse follow from it!

Beginners specially liable to scruples.

Tenderness of conscience, which is common to many souls, is sometimes much increased at the beginning of a spiritual life. Hence, special care should be used at that time to prevent the scrupulous apprehensions which arise. The reason of this tenderness is not so much the consciousness of former sins, as a too severe judgment of present imperfections. These seem to multiply in such souls through the opposition which their corrupt nature offers to their spiritual exercises. Moreover, by these exercises they acquire more light, which discloses a multitude of defects formerly invisible. Hence they become fearful about their present condition. They torment themselves with anxious preparations for confession, knowing as yet no other remedy. As their fears do not cease with absolution, and they experience the same opposition of their sensual nature against internal prayer, they begin to suspect something wrong with their confessions; so these they repeat. Indeed, all their thoughts are taken up with suspicions about their state, and with dissatisfaction about their confessions. By making habitually these anxious confessions, to which, perhaps, they are encouraged by indiscreet guides, they contract an almost incurable habit of scrupulousness and servile fear, from which follow terrible anguish, dejection, and heartlessness in their spiritual duties. They are in imminent danger of rendering their religious state, or at least their religious life, less fruitful, or rather, more dangerous, than if they had continued to lead a common unspiritual life in the world.

Devout souls are, therefore, earnestly recommended to resist scrupulousness at the very beginning. Above all, let them have a care, by prudence and earnest prayer to God, not to fall into the hands of a director who will gratify their

humour for repeated confessions, whether particular or general. If care be had at the beginning, no disease is more easily cured; but by progress it gathers strength, disordering the imagination, disquieting the passions, and corrupting even the judgment, so that it is scarcely possible to find a remedy.

Division of the subject.

For the sake of clearness, we will consider scrupulosity in the causes from which it principally proceeds. These are: (1) Internal temptations proceeding from thoughts and imaginations which we suspect to be sinful; and (2) scruples about approaching the sacraments. In both cases there is a strong suspicion of sin, but uncertainty about its gravity; so to clear up the doubt, scrupulous souls indulge in unquiet, anxious examinations, and oft-repeated confessions. In the following chapter we will speak of internal temptations, and afterwards of temptations and scruples about confessions and communions.

CHAPTER XVI

SCRUPLES ABOUT INTERNAL TEMPTATIONS

Scruples from inward temptations.

THE inward temptations which ordinarily give rise to fear and scruples in timid souls are: (1) imaginations or thoughts which rest in the mind without producing outward effect, as thoughts of infidelity, blasphemy, despair, and so forth; or (2) imaginations or thoughts which produce effects on the body, as thoughts of impurity, anger, and so forth.

Temptation not a sin.

1. The devout, timid soul should bear in mind, in the first place, that to have a temptation is not a sin. Indeed, temptations being sent by God are meant for our good, to give us an occasion of merit. Those sent to us by God are the best for us, for, were they left to our own choice, those best adapted to humble us and to detach our affections from ourselves and creatures would be the last we should choose. Thus, the more displeasing and afflicting the temptation, the more profitable it is for us. Let none be dismayed by the onset of temptations. Self-love cannot be cured but by the application of contrary things; let us, therefore, accept temptations as a special gift of God, assuring ourselves it would be perilous to be long without them. And if we fail to see clearly how our present temptations can turn to our profit, we should content ourselves with the fact that God sees it; otherwise He, Who is infinite wisdom and goodness, would never have permitted us to feel their

sting. Let, therefore, knowledge or curiosity give place to faith.

Still, we must not voluntarily seek temptations; for, '*He that loves the danger shall perish in it*,' says the Wise Man. God will not deny spiritual strength to resist and to make good use of our temptations, even though they come through our own fault or negligence; but He has made no promise to protect us from danger if we voluntarily thrust ourselves into it.

Benefit of internal temptations.

Next, internal temptations are more beneficial and purifying, and more profoundly humble us, than physical pain or even persecutions. Internal temptations discover to us not the malice of others but our own sinful nature, prone to every abomination. By them we are delivered not from other creatures but from ourselves, the last and greatest obstacle to be overcome. And finally they impel us to turn to God for a remedy, for how can help from creatures avail against our own thoughts?

Deliberate consent necessary for sin.

With regard to internal temptations, the devout soul should remember that the mere presence of wicked thoughts or imaginations in the mind is not a sin at all, though they may be there for a considerable time without our adverting to them; they become sinful only when we give deliberate consent to them. Nor is it always in the soul's power to banish them at pleasure, because the imagination is not so subject to reason that it can be commanded to entertain no images but such as reason will allow. It is to a great extent subject to the humours of the body; the devil, too, is sometimes permitted to raise images to disquiet timid souls. He cannot, however, compel us to give consent to his suggestions.

There is not so much danger of consenting to temptations that are merely spiritual, to thoughts of blasphemy, despair, and so forth. Consequently there is not so much likelihood of scruples arising from suspicion of having consented to

them. Sometimes, however, these temptations are so violent and adhere so obstinately that the imagination becomes extremely disordered, so that the soul thinks herself to be in a kind of hell, where there is nothing but blasphemy and hatred of God.

A remedy against temptation.

Her best remedy is quietly to turn her thoughts another way, to neglect the temptations rather than to combat directly against them by contrary thoughts. If neglected, they make a less deep impression on the imagination. She may also do well to signify by word or gesture her detestation of them. Thus, in a temptation to blasphemy, let her pronounce words and express praise and love of God by an attitude of adoration. Let her also be diligent in frequenting the choir, remaining before God in a posture of humility. Having done this, let her banish all suspicion of having consented, as a thing morally impossible.

However troublesome and horrible such temptations appear to be, if they are quietly resisted, or, rather, neglected, they unquestionably purify the soul in a remarkable degree, establishing divine love firmly and deeply in the spirit. Moreover, by occasion of them the soul learns to transcend all disorders and tumults in her inferior nature, adhering to God even when it opposes her most bitterly.

Temptations that act on the body.

2. As for the temptations that act on the body, causing ofttimes disorderly motions and other effects therein, it will be more difficult to persuade timid souls that they have not consented to them. Such imaginations are pertinacious; they seem to cling to us. Moreover, our inferior nature is powerfully inclined to them, insomuch that real effects and changes may be wrought in the body before reason is fully awake to resist them. Even after reason has bestirred itself to oppose them, the images will often continue in the imagination and the motions in the body, so that the timid soul, on reflection, will think that her resistance was so feeble that it scarcely could be accounted resistance at all.

In short, she will persuade herself that she has deliberately consented to them.

However, unless not only the reason reflects upon the sinfulness of such impure thoughts, but the will also at the same time is deliberately moved to approve of them, the devout soul may rest assured that there has been no culpable consent to them. Moreover, if the general disposition of the soul be such that she seldom or never yields to words or deliberate actions in consequence of them, she may confidently determine that she has not been guilty of a grievous offence against God.

Above all things, the devout soul must take care not to suffer these temptations to discourage her from pursuing constantly her appointed recollections, notwithstanding the fact that these thoughts will be apt to throng into her mind, especially at that time; so that she will deem it almost unlawful to appear before God, being full of such impure images. But she should consider that now is the time to prove her fidelity to God. Small thanks to her if she adhere to God when her inferior nature makes no opposition, but, on the contrary, finds pleasure in Him. But if she adhere firmly to God, when adhesion to Him is extremely painful to her, this indeed is praiseworthy. Then she will show herself to be a valiant soldier of our Lord, and worthy of the confidence He reposed in her when He judged her capable of encountering such furious enemies.

Prayer the best remedy.

It is a great blessing and happiness that in all our internal obscurities and disorders we can always make choice of God with our superior will. And when this has been effectually accomplished, however great the disorders of the imagination or of our inferior nature, they rather increase than diminish our merit.

Indeed, this is the great, universal remedy against all temptations—actual conversion to God by prayer. By this means the soul is united to God, and loses for the time the

image and memory of her temptations; or at least she is enabled to oppose them far more effectually than if she fixed her eyes directly upon them, renouncing and detesting them. For in actual union with God there is included a virtual detestation of all that is contrary to Him, whether present or future.

This remedy, then, which contains the virtue of all others, is to be strongly recommended to all interior contemplative souls; for, indeed, only those who live abstracted lives can, without difficulty, recollect themselves at pleasure. However, let every soul capable of using this remedy do so, for there is no other so plain, easy, and secure.

Souls that are thoroughly practised in prayer can not only be united to God in will, but may be conscious of the fact, although the representation of the temptations remains in the understanding, and the inferior nature continues to be much troubled, the temptations being no hindrance to union, nay, perhaps even occasioning a more intense and closer union.

The great light obtained by prayer for discovering the causes and remedies of these temptations and the grace for resisting them is almost incredible to those who do not practise prayer. Through their neglect of prayer, many while living in the midst of temptations are scarcely conscious of any; or, if they perceive them, they have not the strength or the will to resist them. But the soul that duly prosecutes internal prayer to the best of her power, cannot habitually yield to temptation, still less die in a state of sin. Indeed, there is no security to be obtained ordinarily in this life except by means of prayer.

CHAPTER XVII

SCRUPLES ABOUT THE SACRAMENTS

Scruples about confession.

THE time, however, when tender souls feel most bitterly the burden of their scruples is usually during confession, or the preparation for it. Then all former dissatisfaction recurs to their memory; new examinations are made, and not only all the imaginary faults committed since last confession are considered, but former examinations and confessions are reviewed, and defects discovered in them which they think must be confessed. To such souls, partly out of ignorance of the nature, degrees, and circumstances of sins, and partly because their minds are darkened by fear, every sin appears to be mortal, or may be mortal for aught they know; and the mere thought of such a possibility pierces them with grief and fear.

Advice on this subject.

These timid souls, then, should be taught that: (1) The end of the consecration of themselves to God in a contemplative life was not so much to enjoy the Sacraments, which they might have freely used in the world, but to seek God in silence, quietness, and solitude, and to tend to Him daily by the internal exercises of love and resignation, and by quieting and restraining every passion; and external duties are to be used only in so far as they contribute to the increase of this love and confidence in God and quietness of mind. (2) The Sacrament of Penance is a holy institution ordained by God, not to torture but to relieve conscience,

and to bring souls to a sense of confidence in God. (3) The administration of the Sacrament is left by our Lord to priests, who alone are judges as to the character of the sins confessed, and how they are to be confessed. (4) As it is evident confession is their chief torment, causing effects quite contrary to what our Lord intended, such souls should abstain from frequent confession, or make it only in the form that should be prescribed for them. (5) In their examination of conscience, such care and diligence will suffice as they would bestow on ordinary matters of importance, and such as may be done in a short time. (6) It is often far more profitable to exercise virtual acts of contrition by turning directly to God with love, than by reflecting with fear and remorse on their sins. (7) The maxims, that it is a good sign to fear where there is no sin; that nothing is to be done against conscience; that in doubt we should choose the safest side, and so forth: these maxims, though true in general, would, if strictly applied to scrupulous persons, utterly ruin their peace of mind. They are wholly incapable of judging what is contrary to conscience, or what may be said to be doubtful, accounting every fear, however unreasonable, to be against conscience or doubtful. The spiritual director or experienced confessor, therefore, alone is to be judge of these things; he has no interest in the matter except the good of his penitent's soul; he is appointed by God to be judge, and the penitent has no reason to think that he will be unfaithful to his charge.

Exact obedience necessary.

The only possible way (besides humble prayer) to remove these scruples is an exact obedience to a prudent confessor, who will act according to these or similar instructions; and if the timid soul will only take courage and practise them, notwithstanding her fears, she will find that her scruples will gradually subside. But if she neglect them, or obstinately refuse to put them into practice, her fears will not

only grow more dangerous, but she will be inexcusable before Almighty God, and contract a sin of disobedience and ingratitude by resisting the light which God has bestowed upon her.

But at the same time let her remember she will never have the strength and grace to obey unless she seriously practise internal prayer. This alone will make her obedience easy, and free her from the terror she will experience in her sensitive nature.

Nor should she allow herself to suspect that her confessor, set over her by God for her good, understands not her case. He feels not, indeed, her pain, no more than a physician feels the pain of his patients, but he understands the cause of the disorder better than she does, for his judgment is illuminated by supernatural light unclouded by passion. And why should he profess to know the cause if he be ignorant of it? What interests corrupt his judgment? Would he for gain or a reward incur the displeasure of God?

The obstinacy of scrupulous souls.

So ingenious, however, are such souls to their own destruction, that, though they should admit that their confessor understood their past state, still they will see some new circumstance which was forgotten, or they will doubt whether they stated the matter correctly, so that the whole case may be quite different. So every new sin or fault seems to their eyes to have something different from former cases; and thus they try to escape from obedience, but such excuses will be unavailing before God.

They should consider, though it were true that the confessor was mistaken, yet while they obey him *bonâ fide* in a matter concerning confession, they commit no sin and incur no danger by it. Indeed, being an act of obedience for God's sake, and in opposition to a natural inclination and passion, it should be an occasion of merit. So that even supposing the suspected sins really were mortal, they

would not be obliged to confess them, because their confessor judged them to be otherwise.

It is marvellous indeed to see souls, distrustful of themselves and docile in other matters, so obstinate and self-opinioned in this that they cannot even be persuaded that they are scrupulous, though they are almost beside themselves with scruples. Were they to admit that they are scrupulous, then common sense would convince them that they ought not to be their own judge. These souls too often show such an obstinate disobedience by insisting on confessing, or renewing the confession of things forbidden them, that it is marvellous. Against the commands of their confessor and the advice of learned theologians they will persist, and if their confessor will not listen to them they will seek out others, though wholly unacquainted with their state, to hear their scruples. And what ground can there be for such disorder but self-love deeply rooted in their corrupt nature, and the suggestion of the devil to which these souls are miserably exposed on account of the disordered state of their imagination and passions? They would rather confess their virtues for faults, their resistance of their fears in compliance with obedience, than their really serious fault—self-judgment and disobedience.

A scrupulous soul having been forbidden to examine and confess certain particulars which cause her uneasiness, will find herself confronted by a double fear—the fear of disobeying her confessor and the fear of going against her own judgment, which is contrary to that of her confessor. But she should consider that the former fear has nothing of nature in it; indeed, it contradicts her nature in a most sensitive spot, and will, therefore, be a most salutary mortification. And as for her fear of acting contrary to her own judgment, this proceeds altogether from her natural self, from self-love and a desire to be rid of the pain which the memory of her fault causes, or from the suggestion of the

devil who urges her to disobedience. If, then, she cannot expel fear out of her sensitive nature, she must bear it as a mortification, and resist the fear as a temptation.

Scrupulous examinations mischievous.

Indeed, the timid soul should remember that she inflicts more harm on herself and raises more impediments to the exercise of prayer by indiscreet confessions or examinations, than by all the defects she wishes to confess. For these, being generally incurred through frailty, estrange her far less from God than these confessions, by which she acquires a habit of self-judgment, self-will, and servile fear. And to add to the peril, such souls do it under the plea of humility and duty to God and the laws of the Church, and of desire to benefit by the Sacraments.

Common sense will tell them that it is most unreasonable for anyone to be judge of his own state when under the influence of temptation or of fear; at such time the soul is in confusion and darkness. What folly, then, and presumption for an ignorant, frightened person to challenge the office of judge, and to attempt to control the judge who sits in God's seat!

Examen for scrupulous souls.

When a scruple or suspicion of mortal sin comes into the mind of such timid souls that have been forbidden to make the usual minute examination of conscience and detailed confession, instead of following their impulse to run to confession, or in fright to abstain from Holy Communion, let them ask their own conscience with one glance of the mind, Do I know this matter to be certainly a mortal sin, and that it was really committed and was never confessed, defectively or otherwise? And if their conscience does not answer, Yes, I am certain of this, they may not only decide securely that they are not guilty, but they are obliged to abstain from confession and to approach to Holy Communion. For it is morally impossible that such tender souls could commit a mortal sin and it not be apparent at once without examination.

This way of examination is to be seriously recommended to souls that find minute examination destroys their quiet and peace of mind. If, after a short self-questioning, they are unable to determine positively that they have deliberately consented to a temptation to mortal sin, let them resolve never to trouble their thoughts about it again. And if the thought should press itself upon them for re-examination, let them neglect it and treat it as pure temptation.

What constitutes a doubt.

Such souls are to consider that the fear or suspicion that a thing is a sin or is mortal is not sufficient to make the case doubtful; for a doubt is when two opinions are represented to the mind, and the reasons for each are so evenly balanced that the judgment does not incline to one side more than the other. Now, firm assent may exist even while there is a violent fear of the contrary. And a scrupulous person often can give no better reason for his fears than that, for aught he knows, it may be according to his fear.

Another subject of doubt with scrupulous souls is whether they have had true sorrow or not. If anything prevents sorrow from being true, it is just this excessive servile fear which they wilfully nourish by their scruples. However, as they are supposed to practise internal prayer as best they can, there is hardly any doubt that they have true love of God which causes sorrow for sin to be true contrition. This may be done by making an act of sorrow for sin as an offence against God and His Divine love; or only virtually, yet as efficaciously, by an act of pure love of God, whereby they avert themselves from whatever offends Him or is contrary to His love.

Utility of prayer.

From this it appears how great is the security derived from internal prayer; for every act of love or resignation performed purely for God restores the soul to the state of grace, if by sin she had fallen from it. In any case, it advances and establishes her the more in grace.

Indeed, there is not a more certain remedy against scruples and inordinate fear than constancy in prayer. This alone will bestow courage to despise fears when they would hinder the soul from obeying her confessor.

The security and need of obedience, as well as the guilt and danger of following the suggestions of fear, the timid soul may discover by observing that her disobedience is not in virtue of light obtained by prayer—for this light tells her she should contradict her fears, obey her confessor, and renounce her own judgment—but in consequence of the deep impression the supposed faults make on her mind, so that she cannot pray with resignation, and believes that to obey her confessor would be to go counter to her own knowledge. Her security, then, must come from prayer, to which humble obedience will dispose her; on the contrary, if she heeds her scrupulous fears, she will be utterly incapable of prayer. Souls, therefore, that nourish their fears and scruples by frequent unpermitted confessions have much to answer for before Almighty God, for wilfully plunging themselves into a state which renders perfect union with God impossible. They defeat the whole design of an internal religious life, and forsake the ways of obedience, which are full of security in almost every possible case.

Confession for scrupulous souls.

It is far from my purpose to deter souls from the frequent use of the Sacrament of Penance, when they find it profitable. But if by its use they run the risk of committing serious sins, as falling into a state of desperation, and renouncing ways of piety through horror and incapacity to distinguish between mortal and venial sins, then surely it were better to use other means appointed by God for cleansing away venial sins, such as the recitation of the Our Father, acts of humility, contrition, the bestowal of alms, or the devout use of holy water. And if they desire as much as possible to observe the ordinary times of confession, they may

confess some faults which they can state with assurance and without disquietude, and all other faults may be included in a general formula.

If it be objected that this method of procedure would exclude all new matter from confession and so deprive the soul of the blessing and comfort of absolution, I answer, it were a blessing if souls could find no matter for confession Surely the most efficacious means to bring them to that happy state is to liberate them from distressing scruples; for as long as these continue, little benefit or blessing can be derived even from the best exercises or from the Sacraments. We know that in ancient days innumerable saints attained to perfection with little or no use of confession. They had recourse to the serious practice of prayer, abstraction, and mortification; and doubtless these means will be as effectual now as they were then; without them, confessions and communions, though practised daily, will produce little fruit. There is no mortification more effectual and purifying for these souls than to obey God in their confessor, in opposition to their own violent fears, scrupulousness, and perverted judgment.

Holy Communion.

The season when the obedience and submission of scrupulous souls are put to the severest trial is at the time of communicating; for they know that they must not only be free from mortal sin, but there is requisite a certain amount of preparation. In all states they may pray, recite office, exercise mortification, or perform other duties (though they be done with dejection, heartlessness, and distraction), but to communicate during their fears and suspicions is to them most painful and full of terror.

In this case the scrupulous soul approaching to Holy Communion according to the directions of her confessor, and being seized with fear, should try to take courage and lift up her heart to God in words to this effect: 'My God, it is not by my choice, but in obedience to Thee, speaking

to me by my confessor, that I presume to approach Thine altar. In Thy name, therefore, and with the hope of Thy blessing, I will communicate, notwithstanding the fear and horror I feel in my soul. I accept them as a pain and humiliation, and I resign myself to their continuance as long as it shall be Thy pleasure. I hope, and am confident, that Thou wilt not condemn me for obedience, and for resisting the violent impulses and fears of my corrupt passions. It is only for the comfort and support of my soul that I desire to receive the precious Body of my Lord. Were I to think it not to be Thy will that I should now communicate, I should abstain, though it were Christmas Day or Easter Sunday, in spite of the humiliation and shame I should experience in doing so.' Then let her approach to Holy Communion and be assured that she incurs no danger by so doing, but, on the contrary, will merit in a high degree. In the same way she may lift up her heart to God when she abstains from mentioning in confession faults which cause her uneasiness.

Such souls will do well often to practise spiritual communion, preparing themselves for it by the method suggested above. The frequent practice of this will give increase of confidence.

Security of following these instructions.

Those souls to whom these instructions are recommended by their spiritual director, must not allow themselves to be turned aside by others or by what they may find in books. There is nothing written here which is not confirmed by the testimony and authority of learned theologians. They must therefore refrain from consultations with others or from seeking their opinion, otherwise there will be no end to their troubles and distractions. Nor should they read books intended for ordinary souls, which give different advice, for that would be to put themselves deliberately into temptation. Let them content themselves with these or similar instructions, reading them often and resolving to

put them seriously into practice, and they may hope, with God's blessing, to reap a good measure of success.

They must not expect to find advice here to meet all possible cases, whereof the number is almost infinite. They must apply these general instructions to their particular case, observing the Divine inspirations, especially in time of prayer, and using their own experience and natural judgment. For if they withhold their obedience till every scrupulous objection or fear has been answered to their complete satisfaction, their case must be accounted well-nigh desperate. If nothing will satisfy them but riddance from the pain of temptation, an angel from heaven would be unable to quiet them. They must either obey with their eyes shut, or they will live and die oppressed by self-love and servile fear—a very dangerous state to die in.

Still, those who must be helped at first by relying on the word and authority of their director, should not finally rest there. They should make use of such peace as they can secure through his help to dispose themselves so as to have recourse to our Lord, and learn confidence in Him. Confidence will gradually grow by frequent converse with Him in prayer.

Tepidity the root of scruples.

To conclude. A good way of curing this class of scruples is to attack it in its root or cause, which is either spiritual or corporal. The spiritual cause is tepidity. For though it seems to be a temper full of solicitude and zeal, yet the true ground is often an unwillingness to give to God more than we are strictly bound. Now, as we cannot be certain of what is absolutely necessary, there grows up a general sense of fear (which is quite justified, the heart being so corrupted by self-love), of falling short in almost everything, either from want of right intention or of some other requisite quality; and this fear being servile, perplexes and darkens the mind. The remedy for all this, as has been said, is prayer, a humble recourse to God to correct what is amiss

and to supply what is defective. We should be submissive and resign ourselves entirely to Him, to do to our utmost whatever He requires of us. And when we have done all, we should not judge of the state of our soul, its hope or danger, but rely on God only with affectionate dependence. With perfect servants of God, the more they grow in perfection the more light they have to discover innumerable imperfections which cause humility, but do not diminish confidence in God, which is grounded only on His goodness. But imperfect, tepid souls hope to gain security by diminishing their imperfections, a hope founded on pride. And when they see their defects increase rather than diminish, they become dejected and full of scrupulous fears.

Moreover, scrupulousness arising from tepidity much increases the latter. For we begin to despair of expelling our imperfections by our own abilities, and we neglect the true means of overcoming them, serious prayer to God. These souls should try to realize that it is impossible they should ever see themselves in this life otherwise than full of innumerable defects, of which they are not even able to give an account; yet for this very reason, they should have recourse to God and rely upon His pardon, and His help to remove their defects according to His good pleasure. Moreover, if they would not expect absolute certainty about their state, but be content to abide by God's good pleasure and mercy, by which not only perfection but salvation itself is to be obtained, they would soon be delivered from their wearisome fears and scruples.

Not unfrequently this scrupulous temper of mind is to be attributed to bodily indisposition, especially in women. By some infirmities the mind is filled with melancholy distressing images which can scarcely be expelled by counsel: they need rather the help of a physician.

CHAPTER XVIII

HUMILITY

Mortification of the will.

HAVING fully dealt with the principal passions of our sensitive nature, we must now turn to the mortification of the will or appetites of the superior soul. The principal disorder here is pride, the root of all other vices; it is the last to be cured, being established in the inmost centre of the spirit. This disorder, pride, generally discloses its presence in one of three ways: (1) In curiosity of knowledge, seeking to enrich the understanding with unprofitable knowledge, out of ambition of excelling. This is mortified by a nameless virtue which St. Paul describes by a circumlocution, when he exhorts us to be '*soberly wise*.' Enough was said on this subject when we spoke of the regulation of reading. (2) In the love and desire of self-esteem, which is mortified by the divine fundamental virtue of humility. (3) In the love of liberty and independence, and the desire of dignities or authority over others. This is mortified by the religious virtue of obedience. It remains, then, to conclude this book on mortification with instructions about these two eminent virtues, humility and obedience.

Humility.

Humility is a virtue by which we acknowledge the infinite greatness and majesty of God, His incomprehensible perfections, and the absolute power He has over His creatures who are as nothing before Him. By it we subject ourselves body and soul, with all our powers and faculties, to His

Holy will in all things, and for His sake to all creatures according to His will.

Strictly speaking, humility is exercised towards God only, and not to creatures; for all creatures are in themselves nothing, as well as us, and so deserve equally to be despised. Heathens were incapable of this virtue for this reason: they did not and could not subject themselves and all else to God, whom they knew not. Indeed, it was not without reason that they despised and condemned this virtue by which we prefer others in comparison with ourselves, as a hindrance to other good qualities. Undervaluing oneself was, in their opinion, the way to depress men's spirits and to hinder one from any great effort to raise oneself above others. Moreover, if one has the advantage in good qualities, it would be unreasonable and unjust not to prefer oneself. But what an inconsequent way of arguing this is, will presently appear. God its object.

In the virtue of humility, God, towards whom it is exercised, may be considered: (1) absolutely in Himself; or (2) as compared with creatures; or (3) as in His creatures, and as He is participated by them.

In this latter aspect we show humility towards men for God, preferring others to ourselves, contenting ourselves with the meanest things in diet, clothing, books, or with the humblest natural endowments; shunning honours or authority; deprecating the esteem of others, and so forth. Humility towards creatures.

If humility were thus practised by religious, all duties would be readily and cheerfully practised; for if we esteemed ourselves undeserving of honour or kind usage, how could we be impatient under injuries, unresigned in afflictions, or infected with self-love and self-esteem? On what terms of sweetness and peace would we live with all! What tenderness and charity would we manifest towards every one!

The principal act of humility from this point of view is

that which is recommended by our holy Father in these words: 'The seventh degree of humility is that he should not only call himself with his tongue lower and viler than all, but also believe himself to be so in his inmost heart, humbling himself, and saying with the prophet: "*I am a worm, and no man, the shame of men, and the outcast of the people: I have been exalted, and cast down and confounded.*" And again: "*It is good for me that Thou hast humbled me, that I may learn Thy commandments.*"'

Such true humility is so exceptional that few profess it even with the tongue; indeed, a man would be regarded a hypocrite who so much as laid claim to it; yet, in truth, the very essence of humility in relation to our neighbour consists principally in the exercise of this act. For we must not conceive that anyone has become truly humble till he has attained, at least in preparation of mind, to the highest degree with which our holy Father begins. Certain it is that true humility requires this acknowledgment from us, that we believe ourselves in the inward affection of the heart to be inferior and viler than all others.

Not opposed to truth.

To ordinary human reason it may seem to be an offence against justice and truth for one who knows himself to be learned, wise, and of noble parentage, to prefer before himself those who are ignorant, foolish, and of humble origin; or, again, for one who, by the grace of God, lives without blame, even with edification, and is favoured, perhaps, with supernatural graces and sublime prayer, to consider himself inferior to persons he sees abandoned to every vice and impiety. By doing so he would seem to lie against his own conscience and God, and to be extremely ungrateful to Him; still, notwithstanding this, humility is not the least opposed to truth, for if it were, it would not be virtue. Nay, it is pure divine truth itself that forces such an admission from the perfect soul. Indeed, he that knows not, and does not endeavour to feel experimentally,

that he is the vilest and most wretched of creatures, challenges in vain the title of humble and true.

This will appear by discovering the grounds upon which true Christian humility is built, and the means by which it may be attained.

Grounds of humility.

In the first place, we must know that God created all things for Himself, that is, in reference to and in subordination to Himself. So that the perfection of created natures consists in the preservation of this subordination, or in taking a true measure of themselves considered in themselves and as compared with God. If we do this, we shall have to acknowledge for truth's sake that we ourselves and all creatures are in and of ourselves simply and strictly nothing. We have nothing, we deserve nothing, we can do nothing; nay, more, by all that proceeds from ourselves as such, we tend to nothing, and can reap nothing but what is defective. On the other hand, God alone is, and has, unlimited being. He is filled with all the perfections of which being is capable.

This is the principal, universal, unchangeable ground of humility. By virtue of it, all rational creatures are obliged to refer to God alone, not only themselves and all other things (because without Him they have no being), but also their endowments and operations, as far as they are not defective, as also the success of all their actions. So that to acknowledge good to come from any source but God, or to ascribe excellence, or give praise to any but God, is a great injustice, a breach of the essential order in and for which creatures were made and are preserved.

By virtue of this subordination or comparison of His creatures with God, holy perfect servants of God humble themselves most profoundly in His presence. The glorified saints prostrate themselves before Him, casting their crowns at His feet; the Seraphim veil their faces; even our Blessed Lord Himself, as man, profoundly humbles Himself before

the Majesty of His Father. He, moreover, submitted Himself to all creatures, nay, as regards suffering, even to the devil himself. He humbled Himself in all things, accepting, as at His Father's hands, all persecutions and injuries. He could not, indeed, believe, without offending truth, that any creature was as holy and perfect as Himself, and so He could not, from that point of view, humble Himself to them. But He considered all His perfections as not His own, but God's, and therefore assumed nothing to Himself on their account.

Advice to beginners.

In the next place, though the consideration of the non-being of creatures out of God, and the absolute being of God, is the true and proper ground of humility, yet it must be admitted that much supernatural light and grace is required to make the soul sensible of this. By meditation we may come to know it in an imperfect manner, and to believe it; but to realize, to taste, to feel it, this we can never do till we have entered far into God by prayer. Therefore, in the beginning we should make use of another more sensible, and to the weakest eyes perceptible, ground of humiliation, the consciousness of our many imperfections and sins. To this we may join the imperfect discursive knowledge of our own nothingness, and of God's infinite Being, endeavouring by these two exercises to humble and abase ourselves. Thus, little by little, we shall diminish that natural pride which is in every one of us, by which we not only think better of ourselves than of others, excuse our own faults, and blame the best actions of others, but even raise ourselves up against and above God Himself. We regard ourselves as if we were the principle and end of all good, giving to ourselves the credit and praise for all real or imaginary good in us, and referring all things to our own natural contentment.

By the serious and frequent consideration of these grounds of humility, true solid humility will gradually

take root in our soul. Still, this alone will not suffice, unless we add—(1) Abstraction, through which we shall overlook the imperfections of others and see only our own. Abstraction will lead us to fly from employments, from charge over others, or dealings with them, and from the sound of our own praise. And when necessity requires us to treat with others, we shall act with modesty, charity, and cordial respect. (2) Next we must have care to practise the lessons of humility, accepting humiliations and contempt with quietness of mind—nay, endeavouring to welcome them, and even to rejoice in them. (3) Lastly, we must especially practise internal prayer, by which we not only acquire more light to discover a multitude of imperfections formerly unseen, but approach nearer to God and obtain a clear sight of Him, in Whom all creatures and ourselves vanish and are reduced to nothing.

How to esteem others before oneself.

When by these means humility begins to acquire a little strength, it is wonderful to see how ingenious it is in discovering ways to increase in perfection. Then to prefer all others to ourselves will appear not only possible but natural, as being most conformed to reason and duty.

The devout soul will then realize how valuable and necessary humility is, by which alone that deadly poison, pride, is destroyed. She will scarcely see in herself anything but what is truly her own—her defectiveness, her nothingness; nor in others anything but what is God's. In this frame of mind she easily and naturally humbles herself beneath all others, esteeming them above herself in all truth and simplicity. She will never compare herself with others but to humble herself. If she sees natural endowments in herself which others have not, she accounts them not her own, but God's, committed to her care to trade with for His glory only, and of which a strict account must be rendered. And being conscious of her negligence and ingratitude, so far from glorying on their account, she

will esteem them happy who are without them. If others are guilty of open sins, or appear to be without supernatural graces which she has, she will consider that she may be stript of them on account of her negligences, and others, who will make better use of them, enriched with them. She knows by much woeful experience the perverseness of her own heart, but is ignorant of others, and so cannot, without breach of charity, suspect them of so much ingratitude as herself. She will not note small imperfections in others; indeed, not knowing their secret intentions, she will consider that those things which seem to be imperfections may perhaps be meritorious actions. In a word, she will consider that God has made her judge of herself only that she may condemn herself, and of others only that she may excuse them, knowing well that there can be no peril in judging too severely (if that were possible) of herself, but much in judging harshly of another in the smallest thing. And however wicked others may be, she will at least conceive this: that if God had afforded them the light and help she enjoys, they would be angels of holiness compared with her; moreover, they are not guilty of such ingratitude as she is.

By such considerations the devout soul will establish in her understanding a firm conviction of her own vileness and baseness. But to make humility a virtue the will must act upon this belief and compel the understanding to say: 'I will believe myself to be inferior to all according as I find just cause by these considerations; and as occasions arise I will enforce actions in accordance with this conviction.' A conviction of her vileness will make the soul afraid to seek things pleasing to her; she will be content with hard usage, knowing that she deserves far harsher treatment, and ought to be trodden under foot by all. So that out of love of justice she will desire and even rejoice in affronts, persecution, and contempt. And if in

certain circumstances, as in time of sickness, it be necessary to choose or desire comforts, she will accept them in the spirit of humility and mortification—that is, purely in obedience to the Divine Will, and not to gratify her natural inclination, accounting herself worthy of nothing but want, suffering, and contempt.

A Superior must not be thought to offend against this degree of humility when he discovers, reproves, or punishes the faults of his subjects. In doing so he acts in the person of God, to Whom alone it belongs to exercise the office of judge; yet the Superior ought not to esteem himself better than the person rebuked. For though in that particular respect, perhaps, he cannot condemn himself, yet for many other faults which he sees in himself, and cannot see in others, he ought to humble himself and be covered with confusion, whenever the duty of his office requires him to rebuke others, while he himself (as he should think) deserves reproof far more.

When, by the serious practice of humility joined with prayer, the soul is come to a high degree of purity in spiritual exercises, then is attained that more admirable kind of humility which regards God. In this the soul contemplates the totality, the unlimited immensity, of God's being, and thence, reflecting upon her own nothingness (of which she has now a clearer apprehension), she profoundly humbles herself before Him.

Humility towards God.

When prayer has reached perfection, the soul will also mount to the supreme degree of humility which considers God absolutely in Himself, and without express comparison with creatures. The soul fixes her eyes upon God as all in all, and contemplates Him in the darkness of incomprehensibility. She does not, by a distinct act or reflection, consider the emptiness and nothingness of creatures, but simply transcends and forgets them; so that to her they are in very deed as nothing, because they are not the

objects upon which her spirit gazes, nor what she embraces with her affections.

Perfected in act of contemplation.

This heroic degree of humility can be exercised only in the act of contemplation, for then only is the soul conscious of her own nothingness, without express reflection. At other times she feels in some degree the supposed entity of herself and creatures, because it is only in actual pure prayer that their images are expelled, and with their images the affection for them.

Effects of pure prayer.

Much, however, of the virtue of pure prayer remains and is effective afterwards out of prayer; so that when the soul holds intercourse with creatures she sees them not in themselves, but only in relation to God, and humbles herself to God in them; or, if she reflects on herself and turns her eyes inward into her spirit, desiring there to find God, she will at once discover and hate with perfect hatred any considerable imperfection, obscurity, or stain that obstructs her view of God.

As to the sins or imperfections of others, however serious they may be, they are no hindrance to her seeing God, because she marks them not or transcends them; or she is urged on their account to more fervent love of God for His patience, to greater zeal for His honour impaired by the sins of men, and to greater compassion for sinners.

Deliberate imperfections a hindrance to union.

The least imperfection in the soul herself also, being a real hindrance to immediate union with God and perfect vision of Him, is at once discovered by the great light she then enjoys, and is perfectly detested by her. Even faults which formerly appeared no bigger than motes now appear in this supernatural light to be as great as mountains; and defects which she never imagined to be hers, she now sees are not only in her, but abound and exercise great sway over her. Hence St. Gregory observes: 'The higher holy men ascend into God, the more clearly they perceive their unworthiness, because, being encompassed by such pure

light, they discover in themselves defects which before were hidden' (l. 22, Moral. c. i.).

The knowledge and feeling of our nothingness.

Hence it appears that there is a great difference between the knowledge of our own nothingness and the feeling or perception of it. The former may be acquired by a little meditation, or by reading scholastic theology, which will show us that of ourselves we are nothing, and are merely dependent on the one true being of God. But the feeling of our nothingness will never be acquired by study or meditation alone; the soul must be raised and purified by pure spiritual prayer. The devil has better knowledge of the nothingness of creatures than men, yet he has no trace of the feeling. Now, it is only the feeling of our nothingness, our non-being, that is true, perfect humility; and, on the contrary, the feeling of our being, that we are something, is pride.

Degrees of this feeling.

The feeling of our nothingness has two degrees: The first degree regards the corporal or sensitive faculties, when the soul is raised above the body and all desires concerning it, so that she has lost all care and solicitude for it, having in a measure mortified all her inferior passions. This is a high degree of humility, but it is not yet perfect, as may be seen by this, that after the soul has attained to this degree by a passive union there ordinarily follows the great desolation, in which she finds that she is still full of herself and her own being, which she combats in many conflicts and with much bitterness. The second degree follows after the desolation passes away. Here the soul exercises herself in a far more sublime manner, and begins to experience a more perfect feeling of her non-being. It consists in an abstraction from the soul herself and all her faculties and operations, all of which are so lost and annihilated in God that in her exercises of pure prayer she cannot perceive distinctly any working in the understanding or will; she is unable to understand or give an account of what she does when she prays.

The author of *Secrets Sentiers* says that souls who have arrived at this state of perfect union are ordinarily permitted by God to descend from their high abstraction into their inferior nature, even as they were at the beginning of their spiritual life. So that (according to his view) during their descent they must be full of the feeling of their own being. But then, says he, from this descent they little by little, through their internal exercises, ascend higher than they were before; such ascents and descents continue alternately all their lives. Thus writes Barbazon, speaking, perhaps, from his own experience. But whether he was justified in speaking so generally, I leave to the decision of the perfect, who alone can judge of such matters.

But, alas! these contemplations, and consequently their fruits, are very rare, and not in our power to command at pleasure. Indeed, the soul does not arrive at the perfection of prayer till after a passive union, for which we may well dispose ourselves according to our power. But on whom to bestow it, and when, and in what manner, is the free gift and pleasure of God.

Exhortation to aspire to this feeling.

Let not beginners, however, nor proficients in spiritual things, be discouraged because as yet they cannot discover in themselves (or only very imperfectly) a perception of their nothingness. They have not yet a supernatural intellectual species or concept which will evidently and even palpably represent to their mind God's totality and their own nothingness, for it is not in the nature of active exercises to produce it. It is a great blessing of God that He has given them the courage to aspire to it. By perseverance in the ways leading thither they will come in time to the perception of their own nothingness, through which all other virtues will be perfectly exercised by them. Indeed, by it they will come to know both God and themselves aright, and will be in an immediate disposition (as our holy Father says) to attain to that perfect charity which expels all fear.

For this reason he treats particularly and fully of this virtue only, and obedience, which is a branch of it.

We ought, therefore, ever to pray that God would disclose to us our own nothingness and His All-being, and prayer is the only effectual means to obtain this. As for exterior acts and expressions of humility, if they flow from prayer, they may be profitable and acceptable to God. However, for fear of pride, which will intrude and mingle itself even with humility, we should not be too eager to exercise voluntary outward acts of humility out of pretext of giving edification. And when we observe such as are prescribed by the Rule, and are in keeping with our state, we should purify our intention in them as well as we can.

CHAPTER XIX

OBEDIENCE

Mortification of the will.

THE second defect of the will which is to be mortified is the natural love of liberty and independence, and an ambition to rule over others. The virtue by which this depravity is mortified is religious obedience, a branch of humility.

Obedience, as well as humility, principally regards God even when it is performed to man. Indeed, unless obedience to creatures flows from obedience to God it will never advance the soul, but rather nourish vicious affections in it, having its root in self-love, servile fear, and often in pride itself. Whereas if it be grounded on our duty to God, the soul will become so humble and pliable that it will not shrink from subjection to the meanest creatures; it will cheerfully suffer all crosses, contradiction, and pressure, both external and internal.

Obedience, mediate and immediate.

Obedience is performed—(1) Immediately to God; or (2) immediately to man, for God's sake. In this place we will speak of the latter, for in the other is comprehended all duties of piety, and therefore it needs not special treatment.

To submit oneself to man for God's sake (or out of love of God) is harder than to submit immediately to God. It is for this reason more meritorious, and will bring the soul more quickly and efficaciously to perfection. The reasons why obedience to men is so extremely difficult are—(1) Be-

cause, though we acknowledge our Superior to be God's substitute, still, we are not always convinced that his commands in particular cases proceed from him as such. We imagine they proceed from passion, natural interest, aversion, or convenience, so that we do not see that his commands are reasonable, as we should acknowledge God's to be, or that they will produce much good in our souls. (2) Also because we know the Superior cannot see nor judge the heart, and thus may be mistaken; so that it is not easy to submit the mind to one who has no right over it, nor power to see his commands perfectly executed.

Obedience urged by St. Benedict.

In our holy Father's time the Superior not only governed his community, but he was also the director of their consciences. But as in these days obedience is, as it were, divided between the regular Superior and a spiritual director, the subject should give to each the obedience which is his due. He should bear in mind, however, this difference—that obedience due to a spiritual director voluntarily chosen and changeable at pleasure is far less strictly binding than to the Superior, who has God's authority communicated to him and is confirmed by the Church. Moreover, obedience to him is ratified by a solemn vow, by which we give up our will altogether to the will of our Superior. Indeed, so strictly does it bind us that our holy Father (Rule, c. V.) exacts this duty on no meaner grounds than the hope of heaven, the fear of hell, and, above all other motives, the love of God, for, said he, obedience without delay is proper to those who esteem nothing dearer than Christ.

Should proceed from the soul.

Now, the principal reason why a religious engages himself in a life of obedience is for the good and advancement of his soul, and not for temporal advantages, as with secular governments. Therefore, notwithstanding the saying that our souls are exempt from human jurisdiction, notwithstanding, too, that Superiors are seldom the directors of their subjects' consciences, yet, unless their commands are

obeyed in purity of heart, for God's sake, not only outwardly, but inwardly with will and judgment, our obedience will not be meritorious nor in keeping with the general design or the vows of the religious life. If all Christians, as St. Paul teaches, are obliged to obey secular superiors, and servants their masters, not for fear, but for conscience' sake, and in reference to God, Who has invested them with authority in exterior matters principally for the good of their dependents' souls, surely still more will those who have embraced the religious life be bound to obedience, which state was undertaken only for the benefit of the soul.

Limitation of obedience.

Although theologians have discovered in modern times many exemptions and cases curtailing the authority of Superiors, the devout religious who aspires seriously to perfection will be very cautious how he takes advantage of such dispensations. Although by them he may escape, perhaps, the punishment of external laws, still, he should not consider himself at liberty to disobey, unless the things commanded are inconsistent with his duty to God, and are manifestly prejudicial to his soul.

A truly humble interior soul will rarely, and only in extreme necessity, use her right to appeal from her immediate Superior to higher authority, and this she will never do merely to seek rest or to gratify passion, but purely for the good of her soul. Indeed, I scarcely know of a case in which appeal may profitably be made, unless, perhaps, when the soul finds her immediate Superior, from ignorance or dislike of spiritual prayer, curtails the time necessary for its exercise by overburdening her with distracting employments, or by habitually and purposely imposing on her duties at the hour of prayer. But surely the case must be very extraordinary if, by using a little ingenuity and forethought, she cannot secure each day two half-hours for recollection.

Advice to scrupulous souls.

However, for the relief of devout, scrupulous souls good use may be made of the opinions of theologians regarding

the limits prescribed to the authority of Superiors and the degree of obedience due to them; not that they are to be encouraged to dispense themselves from obedience, but lest they should he disquieted, perplexed, and hindered from reaping benefit by prayer and other duties through the tenderness of their conscience, which often causes them to suspect that they have committed a mortal sin of disobedience when perhaps there was scarcely a fault at all. And, indeed, there is little danger of these souls taking advantage of a large interpretation of their obligation in order to relieve themselves of disagreeable duties or to satisfy inordinate passions.

These souls, then, should know—(1) The authority of Superiors is not unlimited, but is confined by certain conditions, as, for example, it must be 'according to the Rule,' neither beside nor beyond it, and the command must be 'unto edification,' and 'not detrimental.' (2) Disobedience to commands which are according to the Rule is not a mortal offence, unless the matters commanded are in themselves of more than ordinary moment, and the command is expressly given with the intimation that it is in virtue of holy obedience, and the subject has no ground to suppose that if the Superior were present he would not have pressed the matter so strongly. (3) In matters of lesser moment disobedience mortally sinful is not committed unless it is done with manifest contempt; or, as St. Bernard expresses it, 'when the subject will neither obey nor submit to correction for disobedience' (*Lib. de Precept. et Dispens.*). So that all faults committed by one who has really a mean or contemptuous opinion of his Superior, and which would never have been committed without such opinion, are not to be reckoned sins of contempt, unless the subject refuses to submit to correction, a fault of which these tender souls are incapable.

Perfect obedience, says St. Bernard, knows no limits.

Perfect obedience.

It extends to all lawful things appertaining to body and soul, and to actions external and internal (in so far as these are voluntarily submitted to the Superior). Indeed, our holy Father, to cut off every pretext for disobedience, does not except even things impossible; so that if things impossible, not merely in the opinion of the faint-hearted, but in reality, are seriously and advisedly imposed by a prudent Superior the subject should endeavour to carry out the order, provided it is not destructive of life.

Defects in obedience.

The following are defects (as reckoned by Turrecremata) which may be committed in obeying; as we correct them, so we ascend the successive degrees of true religious obedience: (1) To do some but not all the things enjoined by obedience. (2) If all, yet imperfectly and incompletely. (3) Or not in the manner required. (4) Or not on the first bidding, but awaiting a second command, or perhaps one in virtue of holy obedience. (5) Or to do them with reluctance. (6) Or only after discussing their reasonableness or lawfulness. (7) To go about them slowly and lazily. (8) To do them rashly and without fit preparation. (9) Through want of a general resolution to obey, to be disposed to contradict when commands come upon us suddenly. (10) To obey, yet not without repining, or at least with marks of unwillingness appearing on our countenance. (11) Or to obey with sadness and dejection. (12) To obey in matters of moment, but not so readily in small matters. (13) To obey in the substance of the thing commanded, but not according to the intention of the Superior or law. (14) When the command is displeasing, to suspect or judge ill of the Superior's motives. (15) To make fictitious excuses of inability to obey. (16) To be of a temper so troublesome and churlish as to discourage the Superior from imposing commands. (17) Out of good opinion of one's judgment, to slight the Superior's way of governing. (18) To seek to draw the Superior to one's own

views, and so in effect to become Superior. (19) When doing the thing commanded, to do it with deliberate inefficiency. (20) Not to do it with cheerfulness and readiness. (21) Lastly, to obey without a perfect intention for God's glory and love.

Lest the beginner should be discouraged by the sight of so many conditions requisite for perfect obedience, and so many defects to be avoided, he must consider that God does not expect at first obedience perfect on all points. He does well if he obeys without sin, not making outward sensible reasons his principal motive, and acting without deliberate fault, as murmuring and so forth. By obeying to the best of one's power, the soul will eliminate little by little her defects, as when learning an art or trade. Even imperfect obedience, so it be not sinful, is of some merit; besides, it disposes the soul to do better another time, by noting the defects and by submitting herself willingly to admonition.

It is no wonder, nor should it be accounted a fault, that the body, being weary and exhausted with many acts of obedience, should exhibit some feeling of reluctance to obey. But the mind or will should never grow remiss, but remain ever invincible, forcing the inferior nature to comply to the utmost of its power, yet at the same time with discretion.

If the thing commanded be in accordance with our natural inclination, especially a post of honour, it is not good to be over-eager to obey. It is better, if it can be done without offence, to seek to avoid the office, wishing that others rather might be employed; or at least let the appointment be undertaken as an act of obedience, and, as it were, against our will. But if the matter be contrary to our inclination, we should undertake it with all possible readiness and cheerfulness, and be desirous that others be exempt from it.

It is not very hard to resolve to forsake one's will in all things, submitting it to another. But to carry out the resolution at all times, whenever a command is laid upon us; or whenever difficult things or things contrary to our inclination are ordered by a Superior against whom the subject has a natural aversion, or of whom he has a mean opinion; or, again, when the subject does not feel in the humour for obeying, or when he feels, however exactly he obeys, he is sure to be greeted with sour looks or blamed —all this requires great courage and perfect self-denial, especially if he persevere in his obedience to the end of his life.

There is a still higher degree of obedience to which interior souls may aspire — viz., that a religious who is harshly treated by his Superior be content, and even desirous, that his Superior should continue to treat him so, or even with greater rigour, provided it may be without offence to God, and that no harm be done by it to his Superior's soul.

No commands, however unsuitable or distracting, can harm perfect souls who are established in recollection and habitually enjoy the Divine presence; but much mischief may be done to imperfect souls. Still, even these, if they obey with patience, quietness, and meekness, may derive profit from such commands; for though they lose one way by a hindrance to recollection, they may recover their loss by rooting these virtues more firmly in their souls. However, the Superior must expect a severe account to be exacted from him if he imposes imprudent, harmful burdens on his subjects.

Example of perfect obedience

A remarkable example of obedience joined to a mortification which is keenly felt by humble souls—viz., to be obliged to submit to undue honours—is recorded in the life of St. Basil the Great. St. Basil, desiring an attendant, applied to a neighbouring Bishop, who recommended him

a certain priest as humble and obedient. St. Basil, wishing to put him to the test, required him to obtain some water to wash his feet. The good priest with modest cheerfulness obeyed, and St. Basil sat down and commanded the priest to wash his feet. This he readily and diligently performed. The Saint then bade the priest sit down, that he in turn might wash his feet. The humble man, without a protest, quietly and calmly, as became one perfect in obedience, suffered his feet to be washed by St. Basil, who was then reckoned the most eminent and revered prelate in the Eastern Church. Upon this proof, St. Basil was satisfied that he had found an attendant fit for the employments to which he destined him; and with many thanks to the neighbouring Bishop, he took the priest to be his inseparable companion.

Prayer a necessary means to perfect obedience.

Beside the outward work, obedience requires the submission of the spirit itself to God alone as represented in the Superior, and the renunciation of one's own judgment at the word of a Superior, however ignorant or injudicious. This frame of mind, which implies the perfection of obedience, can be obtained only by the serious, constant practice of internal prayer. This alone purifies the soul, and renders all things but God invisible to her. Without such prayer, all exterior practices of humility, however obsequious, will have little efficacy towards the acquisition of true obedience.

CHAPTER XX

THE VIRTUES IN GENERAL

Virtues most necessary for internal life.

Up to this we have treated of the first instrument of perfection, mortification, so far at least as we conceive it necessary for our purpose—viz., with the view to internal prayer of contemplation. For this reason we have not included in our scope the moral virtues generally, but have dwelt on those only which more particularly concern interior souls. For the other virtues the reader is referred to books of Christian morality which fully treat of those subjects. Their teaching may be applied to the subject-matter of this book, if a little thought be given to the instructions contained in the foregoing chapters. To conclude this book, I will add a few words concerning the virtues generally.

Advice concerning the virtues in general.

1. Before the soul can attain to perfect contemplation, it is necessary for her to be adorned with every Christian virtue, according to the saying of the Psalmist: They shall go from one virtue to another, and then [and not till then] the God of gods shall be contemplated in Sion.* If the soul halt at a virtue or willingly retain an inordinate affection, it will be impossible to ascend to the top of the mountain where God is seen.

2. Next as regards the manner of acquiring virtues: We must not understand the words of the Psalmist as if the

* 'Ibunt de virtute in virtutem: videbitur Deus deorum in Sion' (Ps. lxxxiii. 8).

soul's progress to perfection were by the acquisition of the virtues successively: for example, first to possess oneself of temperance, and having attained that, to proceed to acquire patience, humility, chastity, and so forth. No, they are all obtained in root together, and we make no progress in one virtue without progressing proportionately in all. The reason of this is that charity is the root of all Christian virtues, and they merely execute such duties as charity (which alone directs us to God, our last end) bids us perform as occasions arise.

True it is that through natural temper of mind, or by more frequent trials or occasions for practising certain virtues, the passions opposed to them may be materially in our bodily disposition more subdued and well regulated than others; yet as regards the disposition of our spiritual nature—that is, the judgment and resolution of the will—they are equally inclined to all good, and equally averted from all evil, because divine love is equally inconsistent with all mortal sins, and combats and subdues self-love in all its ramifications. Our progress, therefore, as expressed in the phrase '*from virtue to virtue*' is to be understood to mean from a lower and less perfect degree of charity and virtue to a higher, till at length we reach the mount of perfection.

3. The third point to note is that this progress and increase in virtue is not at all times equal; for the soul by resisting strong temptations, or by more efficacious use of prayer, makes more rapid strides than at other times; nor is progress always observable by the traveller himself or by others. Indeed, it is neither necessary nor perhaps desirable to heed the rules which are given by some to determine and mark the progress made. Such inquiries seem rather opposed to humility, and probably will produce no good effect in us. It should suffice for us to know that we advance: that God knows perfectly our growth in piety

and love, and that He will most assuredly reward us proportionately, though we should be ever so ignorant as to the degree of perfection reached.

4. Next, all increase of sanctifying grace, by whatever instrument it be produced—by austerities, temperance, mortifications, and so forth—is effected according to the good internal dispositions, impulses, and inspirations of the soul accompanying the use of them. The same may be affirmed in a certain degree even of the Sacraments themselves in the case of adults. For though the Sacraments by their own intrinsic virtue (*ex opere operato*, Council of Trent, Sess. VII., Can. 8) confer a peculiar grace and aid, 'on the part of God' at all times, and on all persons who receive them worthily (Sess. VII., Can. 6 and 7), yet, at the same time, the quantity and measure of grace is said by the same Council to be 'according to the peculiar disposition and co-operation of each person respectively.' So that those who come with more (or less) intense, sustained, and multiplied internal acts of faith, hope, charity, or devotion, receive a more (or less) plentiful measure of sacramental grace. Now, what are all these dispositions and preparations but the exercise of internal prayer? Hence it appears how wonderful is the influence of internal prayer, whether by way of merit or impetration, or by direct efficacy in the production and increase of divine virtues in the soul.

5. Again, if the soul out of the times appointed for prayer—on occasions, for example, of contradiction or persecution—shall neglect to exercise patience, she will necessarily exercise impatience, and consequently will make little or no progress in her prayer. But if the soul use reasonable diligence and watchfulness over herself, not so much in the hope of acquiring a great deal, but so as not to lose much out of prayer, God, by means of her prayer, will infuse such a measure of grace as will cause progress, notwithstanding frequent failings from frailty or inadvertence. But it

will be long before the effects of the infusion will be manifest.

6. Another point: increase in virtue depends on the free grace and pleasure of God. He confers grace in prayer and other exercises in what measure He pleases, administering occasions by His Holy providence for the exercise of the virtues; such occasions are not ordinarily in our own power or at our disposal.

7. Next, as is our progress in virtue, so is our progress in prayer. Not till the soul is purified in a very high degree from self-love is she capable of that perfect degree of prayer which is called contemplation. As our Blessed Saviour says: '*Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.*' And the reason is evident: until the internal eye of the soul is cleansed from the mists of passion and inordinate affections, it neither will nor can fix itself upon such a pure and Divine object. True it is, in every degree of prayer, however imperfect, God in a qualified sense is contemplated. But we do not apply the term 'contemplation' to any but the most sublime degree of prayer. Yet even contemplation is never so perfect in this life but that it may increase in perfection without limit. Moreover, the soul is never so completely liberated from the bitter fruits of original sin (ignorance and concupiscence) as not to find some matter on which to exercise mortification and further purification.

8. Again, virtues are in no other state of life so perfectly established in the depth and centre of the spirit as in the contemplative state, because all its exercises principally and directly tend to the exaltation and purification of the spirit by continual application to, and union with, God, the Fountain of Light and Purity.

9. Lastly, by means of contemplative prayer in an internal life virtues are most easily acquired, most securely retained, and most perfectly practised. In an active life, a person

who aspires to perfection stands in need of many things to enable him to practise the duties disposing to it. For the exercise of external works of charity he needs riches or friends; for spiritual alms he requires learning, study, and so forth. And if by the help of these he acquired an established habit of solid charity, it is not very securely possessed in the midst of so many distractions, solicitudes, and temptations. But a contemplative life, as St. Thomas observes (22, q. 182, a. i. c.), stands in need of very few things, being sufficient to itself. The contemplative person alone, without need of assistance or favour from anyone, may purchase and exercise every virtue—nay, and liberally dispense every kind of charity to others. By prayer alone, exercised in solitude, he can engage God's omnipotence, wisdom, and riches to supply all that is necessary for His Church, externally or internally. The light obtained by prayer will be more than equivalent to long and laborious study unsanctified by prayer, and will enable him to undertake successfully the pastoral care of souls when they shall be committed to him; though, doubtless, prayer will incite him to sufficient study. In the meantime, though he were deprived of all converse with others and of books—nay, though fettered and buried in the darkest dungeon—prayer alone would afford him sufficient entertainment. There he would find God and His Holy Spirit, as truly present and as bountiful as ever; nay, the greater the solitude, the more freely will the soul be enabled to run speedily and lightly in the way of every virtue; for nothing fetters her but self-love and self-esteem. Indeed, virtues once procured are evidently most securely preserved in solitude, from which distractions and almost every temptation are excluded.

BOOK III

PRAYER, THE SECOND INSTRUMENT OF PERFECTION

CHAPTER I

PRAYER IN GENERAL

What prayer is.

THE whole employment of an internal contemplative life has been comprised under the duties of Mortification and Prayer. Of mortification we have fully spoken in the preceding book. We must now treat of the other admirable instrument of perfection—Prayer. By it and in it alone do we attain to the reward of all our efforts, the end of our creation and redemption, viz., union with God; in this alone consists our happiness and perfection.

By prayer, in this place, is not meant petition, which, according to the doctrine of the schools, is exercised principally by the understanding, being a manifestation of what the person desires from God. Prayer, here, means the offering and giving to God whatever He may justly require from us, as duty, love, obedience, and so forth. It is principally, indeed almost exclusively, exercised by the affective part of the soul.

Prayer, in this broad sense, may be defined as an elevation of the mind to God. Or, to express it more fully, thus:

Prayer is an affective actuation of an intellective soul towards God, expressing or implying an entire dependence on Him, as the Author of all good. It is a will and readiness to give Him His due, which is no less than our entire love and obedience and adoration, by humbling and annihilating ourselves and all creatures in His presence. Lastly, it is a desire and intention to aspire to union in spirit with Him. Such are the necessary qualities, which are all, at least virtually, involved in every prayer, whether made interiorly in the soul, or expressed by words or outward signs.

Most excellent and necessary duty.

Hence it appears that prayer is the most perfect and divine action of which a rational soul is capable. It is the action for exercise of which the soul was principally created, for in prayer alone the soul is united to God. Consequently, of all duties it is the most necessary.

To realize more clearly the absolute necessity of prayer we may note: (1) In prayer only are we joined to God, our last end; separated from Him, we fall back on ourselves, wherein consists our chief misery. (2) By prayer, grace and all good are obtained, preserved, or recovered; for no good can be had but by having recourse to God, the Fountain of all good; and this can be done only by prayer. (3) By prayer alone exterior good things are sanctified, so as to become blessings to us. (4) Prayer exercises all virtues, for the merit of our good actions depends largely upon their proceeding from an internal motion of the soul elevating and directing them to God—but this is prayer; so that whatever is not prayer, or is not done in virtue of prayer, is deprived of much of its value. (5) There is no action with which sin is incompatible but spiritual prayer: we may in a state of sin give alms, fast, recite the Divine Office, communicate, or obey Superiors; but it is impossible to exercise prayer of the spirit and deliberately continue under the guilt of sin, because by prayer the soul, being converted and

united to God, cannot at the same time be averted and separated from Him. (6) By prayer alone we approach God and are lifted above our miseries; whereas without prayer the least trouble oppresses us. Hence, prayer is the best remedy against every kind of affliction, guilt, or remorse.

The attacks of the devil, therefore, are in great measure directed against prayer. If he can extinguish it he has all that he wants, separating us from God, and with Him from every good. This is why prayer is pressed upon us with an earnestness unlike any other duty, for we are commanded to pray without intermission. '*We must pray continually and never give over.*'

In the preceding description prayer was defined to be an affective actuation of the soul. By this is meant, first, that prayer which is made with the lips only without an inward attention and affection of the soul—that is, prayer in which the mind has no part—is, properly speaking, not prayer at all; and, secondly, that the exercise of the understanding in prayer by discoursing or devising motives is only a preparation for prayer, and not prayer itself. Prayer is performed only and immediately by the will or affections adhering to God, as will be seen presently.

Vocal and mental prayer.

It follows, then, that the division of prayer into vocal and mental is improper, because the parts of the division are coincident. Vocal prayer, as distinguished from, and still more as opposed to, mental prayer, is no prayer at all. How God regards this kind of prayer is apparent from the words of His prophet: '*This people honours Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. In vain do they honour Me,*' etc.

Yet a good use may be made of this division, for, though all true prayer must be mental, yet some prayers are merely mental without any sound of words; nay, there are some blind elevations of the will so pure as to be without any

explicit internal words or any thoughts which the soul could express. On the other hand, other prayers may be expressed vocally, the soul attending to the sense of the words, or, at least, intending to do so, and this is, properly speaking, vocal prayer.

CHAPTER II

VOCAL PRAYER

Vocal prayer.

As the purpose of this book is to deliver instructions about internal contemplative prayer, little need be said about vocal prayer, and that little will be to consider vocal prayer as an instrument or means to bring souls to contemplation.

As used by the ancients.

It cannot be denied that in ancient times many souls attained to perfect contemplation by the use of vocal prayer alone. And doubtless it would produce the same results in us if we would or could imitate their wonderful solitude, abstraction, rigorous abstinence, and incredible assiduity in prayer. But to supply for such omissions and for our inability to endure such long undistracted attention to God, we have recourse to daily set exercises of internal prayer to procure an habitual state of recollection, so retrieving the loss incurred by the distractions in which we live the rest of the day.

Nevertheless, God's hand is not shortened; even now, if it so pleases Him, He can call souls to contemplation by way of vocal prayer. But if God does do so such souls should observe the following conditions:

1. They must use a greater measure of abstraction and mortification than is necessary for those who exercise mental prayer. The reason is because internal prayer is far more profound and inward than vocal prayer, and affords more light and grace to discover and cure inordinate affections;

moreover, it brings the soul to greater simplicity and facilitates recollection. Hence, vocal prayer, to make amends, must be accompanied with greater abstraction and mortification.

2. Next, they must spend a longer time at their exercises than is necessary for the others, to supply for the inefficaciousness of vocal prayer.

3. When they find themselves invited internally by God to pure internal prayer (and this is likely to be of the nature of aspirations), they must yield to the invitation and interrupt their vocal prayers as long as they find they can exercise prayer internally. This advice applies to all who desire to lead spiritual lives and find it extremely difficult to begin a spiritual course with any kind of mental prayer.

If there are souls whom vocal prayer joined with the practice of virtue will bring to contemplation, it is certain that there is no way more secure; none is less subject to indiscretion or illusion, and none is less perilous to head or health. And in time, though that time will be long, vocal prayers will become aspirative, spiritual, and contemplative, illuminating and piercing to the depth of the spirit.

But in these days the case is very extraordinary, and indeed unknown. Contemplatives, therefore, should not dispense themselves from the exercise of mental prayer upon any pretext or temptation. They may, perhaps, find their vocal prayers undistracted, and their recollections painful and disturbed; but in time they will discover that the cause of this difficulty was either bodily indisposition or a temptation of the devil. Anyway, it is certain that little less than a miracle will be required to cause vocal prayers in imperfect souls to become contemplative, or produce profound recollection; even souls who have long practised internal exercises do not find the recitation of the Divine Office produce such results. Those extraordinary contemplations, then, which sometimes come to souls, without

any great merit or disposition on their part, are not to be esteemed, but should be viewed with much suspicion. In no case may they be made an excuse for neglecting solid exercises of internal prayer.

To this purpose we may quote the experience of St. Ignatius. He relates that his soul received extraordinary illuminations at his studies; whereas during his mental prayers he experienced nothing but difficulty and obscurity; in time he discovered this to be the work of the devil.

Vocal prayer instrumental to contemplation.

Voluntary vocal prayer may be useful to contemplative souls at the beginning of their spiritual life, especially for simple, unlearned persons who are not fit for discursive prayer. It may be useful even for the learned as a means of increasing their attention to God; but it must always give place to internal prayer when they find themselves disposed to it.

Necessary vocal prayer.

As for the vocal prayer, which is of obligation, no plea of finding more profit in internal exercises can be esteemed a valid excuse for neglecting or disparaging it. Though souls of the best dispositions might perhaps advance more by internal exercises alone, yet souls generally, even in religion, are so tepid and negligent that if they were left to their own voluntary devotions they would scarcely ever exercise either mental or vocal prayer. Hence, as a distinction could not be made between the fervent and negligent, it was requisite that all should be bound to the public external performance of the Divine Office, praising God with the tongue as well as the heart, because for this purpose was it given. Thus, order and decorum are observed in God's Church, and the employment of angels and saints is imitated by hearts and tongues solemnly uniting to give praise and glory to God. Public vocal prayer was also necessary to edify and allure sweetly those who are not bound to the Divine Office. These, perhaps, would never think of God were they not encouraged to turn to Him by

seeing good souls spend a considerable portion of their time in solemn prayer and praise.

Degrees of attention in vocal prayer.

In every kind of prayer, as has been said, there is required attention of mind, without which it is not prayer. But there are degrees and kinds of attention, all of them good, yet one more profitable than another.

1. There is an attention which consists in an express reflection on the words pronounced mentally or vocally. This attention in vocal prayer cannot very powerfully or efficaciously fix the mind and affections on God, because the mind is swiftly called to new considerations as the sentences succeed one another. This is the least perfect degree of attention, of which all souls are in a measure capable, and the more imperfect they are, the easier it is for them. But souls that have arrived at established affections towards God cannot readily quit a thought or affection which unites them to God for a new one following in the Office ; and if they should do so, it would be to their prejudice.

2. The second degree is that of souls fairly well practised in internal prayer. They come to the Office, bringing with them, or through the recitation raising in themselves, an efficacious affection for God. They wish to continue it with as profound recollection as they can, not caring whether it is suitable to the passage which they pronounce or not. This is an attention to God, though not to the words, and is far more beneficial than the former kind of attention ; to oblige souls to quit this attention for the former would be prejudicial and unreasonable.* For all vocal prayers are

* This way of praying vocally much resembles the oft-recommended method of reciting the Rosary by reflecting on the mysteries of faith while repeating the *Hail Marys*. This method has the approval of St. Teresa—at least, when reciting prayers (such as the Psalms) which are not easily understood. 'Let us endeavour,' she says, 'to understand Who is His (Christ's) Father, what kind of

ordained only to supply souls with good matter for moving their affections by which they may be united to God. But a soul which has already attained to that end, which is union as long as it lasts, ought not to be separated from it and compelled to seek new means till the efficacy of the former is spent.

3. The third and most sublime degree of attention is that by which vocal prayer becomes mental. In this, souls, while most profoundly and simply united to God, can, without detriment to union, attend to the sense and spirit of each passage that they pronounce — nay, may even find their affection and union increased and simplified by it. This attention comes not to a soul till she has arrived at perfect contemplation, by means of which the spirit is so habitually united to God, and the imagination so subdued

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country that is to which He is about to conduct us, what those things are which He promises to give us, what are His dispositions, how we may best be able to gratify Him, etc. . . . If you wish to continue dwelling on these thoughts, *and at the same time to pray vocally, by all means do so;* but do not presume to speak with God while thinking of other (worldly) things.' But it is well to point out that this was not the practice and the kind of attention aimed at by the older writers. St. Augustine says: 'If the Psalm prays, pray; and if it mourns, lament; if it expresses joy, rejoice; and if it hopes, hope; and if it fears, fear' (in Ps. xxx., Sermon iii.). St. Bernard, also, in his exposition of the *Canticle of Canticles*, says you should pray 'with pure hearts'—that is to say, 'so as to occupy your thoughts while you are chanting with nothing else than the words which you are chanting. . . . I do not counsel you to carry with you when you go into the choir even those thoughts which you have received from the books which you have been recently reading while sitting in this cloister, or those which have come to you from my voice in this lecture-hall of the Holy Spirit. They are indeed to edification; but they do not edify you when you reflect upon them while you are chanting. For the Holy Spirit does not regard as acceptable that which you allow to obtrude at such an hour, which has no concern with your immediate duty, and occasions the neglect of a part of it.'

to the spirit, that it cannot rest upon anything that will distract it.

Happy are those souls (God knows the number is very small) that have attained to this third degree! It can only be reached by a careful practice of the former in their order, especially of the second degree. And therefore, in the use of vocal prayer, even imperfect souls will do well (whenever they are sufficiently recollected) to continue as long as they can with the same thought and affection, preserving as much stability in their imagination as possible.

The best way to acquire and increase this recollected way of praying vocally is to practise meditation, or, better still, immediate acts of the will, the end of which is to procure an immovable attention and adhesion of the spirit to God. So much concerning vocal prayer.

CHAPTER III

THE EXCELLENCE OF INTERNAL AFFECTIVE PRAYER

Internal prayer in general.

INTERNAL or mental prayer, which will henceforth occupy our attention, is (1) imperfect and acquired, or (2) perfect, or, properly speaking, infused prayer. The former is a preparation and disposition for the latter. By it the soul is fitted and rendered capable of the prayer of contemplation, the end of all our spiritual and religious exercises. I shall therefore treat of internal prayer through its several degrees till we come to the highest, which will bring the soul to the state of perfection.

Excellence of affective prayer.

Before giving instructions for the exercise of the various degrees of internal prayer, it will be requisite as an encouragement and preparation to show the necessity and excellence of internal prayer in general, I mean especially of affective prayer; for, as for discursive prayer or meditation, the world is already stocked with books which prescribe rules for its practice with more than sufficient nicety. These authors extol meditation with too partial an affection, and neglect, or perhaps scarcely understand, what is true internal affective prayer; yet, notwithstanding, it is the only efficacious instrument that immediately brings souls to contemplation and perfect union in spirit with God.

It would seem unnecessary in these days to defend the use of internal prayer. Anyone who reads the writings of the ancient solitaries, of St. Augustine, St. Basil, St. Gregory

Nazianzen, and others, will see that they knew and practised profound internal recollections, and exhorted souls to continual attendance to God and His Divine presence in the spirit. Ample proofs of this will appear in the course of these pages.

The ancients, it is true, have not delivered any exact methods for the practice of this prayer. In those times it was not deemed necessary, or at least there was no need, to communicate any method to the world. For souls that lived altogether cut off from worldly business or converse; engaged continually in laborious and penitential exercises; undistracted by the images of creatures or by inordinate affections—there was nothing to restrain them from mounting to spiritual union with God. For them it was enough to know that the end of their soltiude was to live in continual converse with God, and to suffer themselves to be led and controlled by His Holy Spirit. To such all minute instructions would be distracting and entangling. Hence our holy Father, while ordaining daily conventual recollections for the exercise of what he calls pure prayer, neither explains what he means by it, nor gives instructions how to exercise it.

Its great need.

In these days, when religious and others who aspire to contemplation seem to lack the courage or strength to support such solitude and austerities, lest the spirit of contemplation should fail in the world, God raised up in Germany masters of contemplative prayer, as Suso, Harphius, and Thauler, and later in Spain St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross. They, moved by God's Spirit, as the grace of miracles conferred on them witnesses, held it necessary to supply the want of solitude and austerities by urging the daily practice of internal recollected prayer, prescribing the order and time for the performance of it. They have also discovered more exactly the degrees and progress of prayer, and they earnestly exhort souls to pursue it diligently,

maintaining that without it, it is impossible to comply with the principal end of a spiritual or religious life.

Its necessity in these days.

I will content myself here with giving the sum of the exhortations of these illuminated souls by quoting the following passage from one of Cardinal Bellarmine's sermons: 'This I believe I may truly and confidently affirm, that without a diligent pursuit of internal prayer none will ever become truly spiritual or attain to any degree of perfection. We see many who often in the year approach the Sacrament of Penance, and, as far as human frailty will permit, endeavour with sufficient diligence to purge away the stains of sin. Yet they make no progress; they are still the same as they were. If they return again to the same tribunal the following week, they bring neither fewer nor less serious faults than those which they previously confessed. Nay, without offending against truth, I may add what is still stranger. We see sometimes religious, and not a few priests, who by their vocation and tonsure profess sanctity, and assiduously read the sacred Scriptures and books of piety; who often, if not daily, offer the most holy Sacrifice; who have neither wives nor children, and are free of cares and solicitudes which may distract them from continual attendance to divine things. Yet after all this, they are so devoid of devotion and the Spirit of God, so earnest in the love of secular vanities, so filled with impatience, envy, and all inordinate desires, that they seem to differ not one jot from secular persons wholly taken up with the world. The only cause of these disorders is that they do not seriously enter into their own hearts by exercises of introversion, but only esteem and regard the exterior,' etc. (*in Fer. 2 Rogat.*). Thus far the words and too just complaint of the learned and pious Cardinal.

This with much reason may be extended even to religious in contemplative orders. They too often mistake the true way to contemplation, erroneously believing that it may be

attained to by the exact performance of outward observances, with the solemn recitation of the Divine Office and the exercise of discursive prayer. These active exercises produce little fruit in the interior reformation or simplification of their souls, because they rest in them, and do not proceed to the truly enlightening exercises of internal affective prayer, the prayer of the heart or will, produced quietly and calmly by the affections and not by the understanding ; a prayer made without distracting methods, without bestirring the imagination or wearying the soul by laborious discourses, which are only imperfect preparations to true prayer.

Fruits of internal affective prayer.

The excellence of internal affective prayer is indeed inestimable. It deserves to be purchased even at the cost of all the pains and efforts of our whole life. To realize its superiority over every other kind of prayer, vocal or discursive, we will state the following admirable benefits it confers :

Internal affective prayer is that prayer by which alone our union in spirit with God is perfectly obtained. By this prayer the will with all the powers and affections of the soul are applied to loving and adoring this alone beatifying object; whereas in vocal prayer there is a continual variety and succession of images of creatures suggested—images which distract imperfect souls from a strict application to God. And meditation or discursive prayer, as such, is little more than a philosophical contemplation of God, hindering or delaying the soul in fixing her heart and affections on God, which are what God principally desires.

Next, by prayer of the will, the soul enters more profoundly into God, and partakes of the beams of His Divine light more plentifully than in other kinds of prayer. By it she also discovers God's perfections more clearly, and sees her way more perfectly than by any other prayer. The reason of this is because the soul becomes profoundly intro-

verted when she endeavours to apply her affections entirely on God. Then the impurity of her intentions and inordinate affections disclose themselves; the mists raised by them are dispelled; and she discovers by a real perception and feeling how prejudicial they are to her immediate union with God. Whereas when the understanding is occupied with the consideration of God or of the soul herself, the imagination will hardly represent to the soul either God or herself with perfect simplicity and sincerity. It will be blinded and seduced by natural self-love, which will invent a hundred excuses to deceive the soul, and make her believe that many things are intended purely for God which proceeded principally, if not altogether, from the root of concupiscence and self-love.

A third benefit of affective prayer is this, that not only Divine light to direct, but also spiritual strength to do God's will, is obtained by it, and this in a twofold manner: first, by impetration grounded on the promises made by God to prayer above all other good actions; and secondly, by a direct efficacy, for the merit of our external actions depends upon the internal disposition of the soul exercising charity and purity of intention, and conquering the resistance of our nature. Moreover, all internal exercises of virtue are, strictly speaking, direct prayer of the spirit. And, lastly, as all habits are acquired by exercise, it follows that by persevering in internal prayer the soul is enabled to practise all virtues with facility and perfection.

We may add that such prayer is universal mortification, a mortification the most profound, internal, and perfect that a soul can possibly perform, being destructive of all sensual pleasure. For the will forces the inferior nature and the powers of the soul to turn themselves from all pleasing objects and to concur in its internal actuations towards God, and this oftentimes amidst distractions from vain images, or a torpid dulness of heart, or perhaps with

the violent opposition of the sensual nature. So that as far as feeling goes there is only repugnance in such an exercise; nay, perhaps the spirit itself is plunged in darkness, and cannot even by a reflex act derive any consolation from the exercise. Such an internal desolation is a mortification to some purpose; yet, though of extreme bitterness, it has an immense efficacy to purify and perfect the soul in every respect. Thus, St. Chrysostom says with good reason: 'It is impossible; I repeat, it is utterly impossible that a soul should ever sin that with due care and assiduity prays to God' (*Tract. de Orat.*).

Again, affective prayer is the only action which cannot possibly be wanting in purity of intention. Souls may, from purely natural motives, observe fasts exactly, obey, keep choir, approach the Sacraments, indulge in speculations during meditation, or yield to self-love in sensible devotion, and probably will do so if their intentions be not purified by internal affective prayer—that is, by having their will fixed by charity on God. Whereas a crooked intention would be speedily detected if it should intrude itself in internal prayer of the will; and unless it were contradicted and expelled, there could be no progress. It is therefore impossible to find an exercise more secure and profitable than affective prayer, for by virtue of it alone do other exercises concur to bring the soul to perfection.

Lastly, it is affective prayer of the will alone that makes other kinds of prayer deserve the name of prayer. Were it excluded, meditation would become mere speculation, and vocal prayer but an empty sound of words. God desires our hearts and affections only; without them our tongues and brains are of no value. Indeed, attention in any prayer is valuable only in so far as the heart concurs. Attention of the mind only will not constitute prayer, for then study or disputations about divine things might be called prayer. Hence the words of an ancient hermit:

'A man does not truly pray who, though he be on his knees, is distracted with any wandering or inattention of his heart.' Soto also writes to the same effect: 'Attention cannot possibly be wanting to mental prayer (of the heart), since attention itself is the very prayer.' It is, therefore, a contradiction to say that one prays mentally and is not attentive; for as soon as the mind begins to wander it ceases to pray. Vocal prayer, therefore, is only that kind of prayer which may want attention, viz., when the thoughts turn to other objects, and the tongue continuing gives forth an uncertain sound. Moreover, the attention which is necessary for discursive prayer is of little value unless it is accompanied with an attention (as we may call it) of the heart.

Exhortation to pursuit of prayer.

These inestimable benefits, which flow from internal prayer of the will, being considered, the devout soul will account no labour too great to purchase so invaluable a jewel. And Superiors should esteem no duty so pressing as the duty of instructing and helping their subjects in the practice of internal prayer. Thus says St. Bernard: 'Whosoever begins a religious course of life must be taught spiritual prayer, and in elevating his mind to God he should transcend all corporeal things and images.' And with good reason did the holy Abbot Nilus, a disciple of St. John Chrysostom, say: 'Happy is the soul that when she prays empties herself entirely of all images and forms; happy is the soul that prays fervently and without distraction; such a soul increases continually in the desire and love of God. Happy is the soul that, when she prays, altogether quits the use and exercise of all her senses; happy is the soul that, during the time of prayer, loses possession and interest in all manner of things (but God)!'

But the soul must expect to pass through many difficulties before she attains such purity in prayer. As the same author says: 'All the conflict which rages between us and

the devil is about nothing else but prayer, as being most necessary to us and most destructive of all his designs.' Hence a holy Father, when asked what duty in the religious life was most difficult, answered, 'To pray well.' The reason is because prayer cannot be perfectly exercised till the soul is cleansed from every kind of impurity, not only from affections to creatures, but even from their very images.

CHAPTER IV

PRAYER WITHOUT CEASING

HAVING shown the necessity and excellence of affective prayer, we will now speak of its qualities and conditions. For the present I will insist on three only. The first regards the extension or duration of prayer; the second the intensity or fervour of it; and the third, the principle or cause from which it must proceed, the Holy Spirit.

Conditions required for affective prayer.

As regards the first point, the extension of prayer, our Lord commands us never to omit this duty. '*We ought always to pray*,' He says, '*and not to cease*' or grow remiss. And St. Paul exhorts all Christians indifferently to pray without intermission. Now in this precept of our Lord is contained an obligation so express, so universal, so often confirmed affirmatively and negatively, that it seems impossible to weaken its force or to discover any exception. It binds *semper et ad semper*, in all places and at all times. In all the Gospel we can scarcely find a precept so imperative and so unquestionable.

How, then, can anyone read without grief and indignation the interpretations invented by some writers to defeat this necessary duty? Because, perhaps, no one can say positively that, *hic et nunc*, actual prayer is binding under mortal sin, they conclude that with the exception of two or

False interpretation of this precept.

three moments in life it is not needful to pray. They admit the obligation in the first moment the child comes to the use of reason, and again when the soul is about to expire; but all beyond that is a matter of counsel. As for those who are under obligation to recite the Divine Office, such (they say) are bound under sin only to the external pronunciation of the words: attention is but a counsel of perfection.

Error of the Euchites.

In ancient times an heretical body wandered as far in a contrary direction. By a mistaken interpretation of the precept, they condemned all things but prayer. They contemned the Sacraments, omitted the duties of their vocation, and refused to do external acts of charity. From this folly they were called 'Euchitæ,' persons who did nothing but pray.

Meaning of this precept.

The truth lies between these extremes. Certain it is that we must aspire to uninterrupted prayer; but it is equally clear that, besides prayer, many other duties are required of us. The true significance of our Lord's precept may be discovered by two passages from St. Paul: '*God hath created meats to be received with thanksgiving by the faithful, and by them that have known the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be rejected that is received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer*' (1 Tim. iv.) And again, he says to the Corinthians: '*Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God*' (1 Cor. x. 31).

From these passages it appears, first, that all creatures in their use are unsanctified—that is, profane—unless they are used with prayer; and, secondly, that we ought not only in the use of created things, but in all our actions, to accompany them with prayer and consecrate them to God's glory; so that to perform our actions perfectly, we must continually be in actual prayer or occupied in something done in virtue of prayer.

Although souls are not obliged to attain to the perfection of their state, they should at least aspire to it. For no man can love God with sincerity, or with a love worthy of Him, that shall fix a limit to his love, or that shall not aspire continually to a higher degree of it. So here we are to conceive that this precept of praying continually, so indefinitely stated, so earnestly pressed home, so widely applied by our Lord and His apostles, comprises a universal obligation; so that although the perfect only really accomplish it, still no one, even the least perfect, can dispense with it, or neglect to strive after it. For everyone must exercise as much prayer as shall be needful to sanctify his vocation, and render the works and duties of life acceptable to God, and conducive to his eternal happiness.

The ground of this obligation is firm and apparent. Even reason teaches that all should be done in reference to our last end, which is God—that is, with a sanctified intention; for what is not done with a sanctified intention is likely to be of little value: it will probably be a work of our corrupt nature only. Now, there are two things principally which sanctify our actions and the use of things, viz., the word of God and prayer: the word of God—that is, the certain knowledge from revelation that the action or thing is in itself lawful; and prayer proceeding from the assurance that the thing is lawful for us. Thus the soul acknowledges the thing to be God's gift, desires His blessing upon it, and refers it to His glory. Hence it evidently follows that things in themselves are unsanctified, and conduce but little to our last end, and are often even prejudicial to it. We should, therefore, endeavour to sanctify our actions and all things; and this we do by prayer.

Prayer the measure of holiness.

From this it appears that the degree of grace and holiness acquired by anyone is to be measured principally by the influence prayer has upon his actions. The more frequently his actions are performed in virtue of prayer,

the more perfect and holy will he be, and the more nearly will he approach his chief end; and he whose actions do not for the most part flow from prayer is not yet perfectly disposed to his last end.

Danger of neglect of prayer.

Though it may be impossible for anyone to say that, *hic et nunc*, actual prayer is binding under grievous sin, yet it is certain that a man has reason to fear for his state if he does not use as much prayer as is necessary to sanctify and render meritorious the greater part of his more important actions. In other words, he is in a state grievously sinful who, for the most part, lives wilfully in a neglect of grace, which can be obtained only by prayer. Hence, the disciples of our Lord sought instructions only how to pray, for that art acquired, all other good things will follow in its train. When all actions are performed by grace obtained by prayer, and for the end proposed in prayer, then a person may be said to be in continual prayer; much more if his actions be accompanied with an actual uplifting of the spirit to God.

The holy Rule obliges us to prayer.

This is the perfection of prayer which St. Benedict's Rule commends to us. Besides the set exercises of vocal or internal prayer, it bids us maintain an uninterrupted attention to God, and a tendency in spirit towards Him; so that whatever actions we perform they should be accompanied by most earnest and fervent prayer. That this perfection of continual prayer has been attained by the ancient contemplatives, and was accounted by them an essential duty of their vocation, is evident from the writings of Cassian. This, says a holy hermit, is the end of all perfection, to have the soul so spiritualized and purified from all carnal desires, as to be in an actual ascent to spiritual things, until all its conversation, employment, and every beat of the heart become one continual prayer. We have already mentioned a hermit whose spirit was so continually fixed on God that he could not withdraw his

thoughts for the space of time requisite to fetch from the other end of his cell some things that his neighbour desired of him. Gregory Lopez also admitted a similar degree of continual attention to God, acquired by long practice of recollection, so that no work, intercourse, or study could interrupt it. Another hermit alluded to by Cassian (Conf. 19), called John, said of himself that he forgot sometimes whether he had taken his daily repast, so continual was his prayer. Indeed, their very senses became stupefied, so that they saw not what was before their eyes. Thus, in the *Lives of the Fathers* it is recorded that a certain monk, being on a journey, met a little company of religious women, and seeing them he turned out of his way to avoid them, whereupon the abbess said to him: 'If thou hadst been a perfect monk, though thou hadst seen us, thou wouldst not have known that we were women.'

Affective prayer alone can be continual.

It is impossible for the soul to continue without interruption in vocal prayer. There are so many occasions when the tongue must be employed in other ways; besides, it would utterly exhaust our strength. And as for meditation, its exercise is so laborious that it would ruin the mind to force the imagination to discourse continually on spiritual subjects.

Hence the exercise of the will in holy desires or aspirations must be the only way by which this precept of our Lord can be perfectly accomplished. The soul is naturally engaged continually in the exercise of some desire or other without the least inconvenience; so that if by practice we can so rectify our desires as to place them on their only true and proper object, God, it will follow necessarily that the soul will be in continual prayer. 'If thou dost continually desire (God), thou dost continually pray,' says St. Augustine. By constant practice such desires will become easy and natural; so that, without pressure applied

to the imagination or understanding, they will be continued without interruption, and flow as freely and easily as breath from the lungs. Where such desires abound, flowing from a holy inward temper of soul, no employment that may be undertaken will hinder them; on the contrary, they will give a tone and character to all our actions, directing them to the Object of our desires and adding to them warmth and fervour.

Vocal prayers and meditation insufficient.

It may be asked whether in contemplative orders, where much solitude and austerities are observed, souls may attain to uninterrupted prayer by meditation or by prolonged vocal prayer without exercising constant recollections of internal affective prayer.

As for meditation, it is quite incapable of raising the soul to a state of constant prayer. It is useful as a preparation for a time, but it is impossible to make it the constant exercise of a contemplative. For, as will be shown hereafter, the imagination and understanding by much use in a secluded life will become so barren, and will produce so little effect on the affections and will, that their continued exercise will become insupportable. So that the use of meditation must be superseded before the soul will come to have a continual flow of affections and holy desires.

Next, with regard to vocal prayer and the Divine Office: no doubt religious by their use may be brought to the habit of continual prayer without set recollections. But to produce this result they must observe the following conditions: (1) They must be as attentive as they reasonably can. (2) Out of choir they must preserve their minds from distracting affections or solicitude about their studies or other employments. (3) They should watch over themselves not to entertain thoughts which will be harmful. By such means the ancient hermits attained to perfect prayer. (4) Another recommendation is that such persons should content themselves with the Divine Office and public

prayers, and not burden themselves with a number of voluntary ones. Thus, Turrecremata says that the voice and other external acts in prayer are to be used only in so far as they foster devotion, so that, if they should cause us distraction, we should abstain from them. St. Augustine, doubtless speaking from experience, says: 'The greater the progress thou makest in contemplative wisdom, the less necessary will vocal prayer be.' If, then, such persons do not adopt set recollections in their solitude, they should at least keep their minds in a state of as much recollection as possible by frequent good desires, so as to preserve an affection for prayer and an appetite for the succeeding Office.

Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that vocal prayer, however much prolonged and though practised in the deepest solitude, will prove ineffectual where the true spirit of contemplative prayer is unknown; and such ignorance has been found even in orders of great abstraction and severity. Thus Germanus and Cassian, who had spent many years in a strict cœnobitical life, were astonished when they heard the holy hermits discourse of pure spiritual prayer free from images.

Continual prayer acquired by daily recollections.

Ordinarily speaking, then, the only efficacious and immediate disposition to the habit of uninterrupted prayer is the constant exercise of internal prayer of the will. By this practice the soul is forced to a close attention to God and a tending towards Him; she gradually becomes better disposed to frequent converse with Him, and in time she loses all pleasure in creatures.

Such will be the effect of constant and fervent recollections. As for ejaculatory prayers — good affections exercised now and then—though very profitable, especially when used in the midst of reading or other external employment, yet they will not alone produce this habit in the soul, not even when joined with the recitation of the Divine Office. The reason is, that being so short and exercised

with so many interruptions, their virtue is quickly spent, so that they produce but little effect upon our subsequent actions. The ejaculatory prayers commended by the hermits in Cassian are of a different nature from those we are speaking of. The ejaculations of the hermits are really infused aspirations, and flow from the habit of continual prayer already acquired, and are not a mere preparation for it.

Who comply with this precept.

To conclude. No one in the contemplative state of life can account himself to have adequately satisfied his obligation to pray without ceasing unless he acts as follows: (1) He should exercise as much prayer as is consistent with his abilities, and that prayer should be of a kind conducive to contemplation; yet, on the other hand, he must not strain imprudently beyond his strength in an attempt to pray perfectly at first, lest it should happen to him according to the saying of the prophet, '*Because he did more than he was able; therefore, he perished*' (Jer. xxviii.). (2) When discretion or necessary employments withdraw him from actual prayer, he should still preserve in his mind a desire for it, and a resolution to break through all discouragements and hindrances in the pursuit of it. (3) He should endeavour to do his actions in virtue of prayer—that is, with the pure intention which God gave him in his previous recollection. (4) He should refrain from voluntary employments that indispose his mind for prayer, keeping his soul in a disposition that will enable him to perceive and correspond with any interior invitation to prayer which God may give him. (5) Lastly, he should practise mortification commensurate with his state, rooting up the inordinate affections which cause distraction and hinder a state of recollection. As the fundamental precept of loving God obliges the soul to do nothing contrary to that love, so the precept of prayer binds us to be always in a disposition ready to exercise it.

Let souls, therefore, consider in what a dangerous state they remain if they content themselves with a few heartless distracted vocal prayers; for often temptation can be resisted only by an actual exercise of prayer. Besides, prayer is unlike other habits. A scholar by ceasing to study does not presently forget or even diminish the knowledge he acquired; but the soul that is not engaged in prayer, or at least has not an habitual desire of prayer, forthwith sinks into her inferior nature and loses much of the strength acquired. We have not always occasions for exercising particular virtues—temperance, patience, chastity, and so forth; temptations against them do not always assail us. But we may always pray, and we have always need to do so; for, unless the soul prays, or at least has the virtue of prayer in her, she is distracted and disunited from God, and is consequently exposed to all kinds of enemies, being deprived of the only means of resisting them; so that the dangers and miseries of a life without prayer are indeed manifold and inexplicable.

CHAPTER V

SENSIBLE DEVOTION

We have seen that our prayer, as to its extension or quantity, should be without limit; that is, our prayer should be incessant, or at least the virtue of it must enter into all our works, whether study, labour, or intercourse with others. And so far from our work suffering any prejudice from it, on the contrary it will be greatly benefited and spiritualized, insomuch that where prayer is wanting even the most specious works are of little value.

Intensity of prayer.

And now as to the intensity or fervour of prayer. Prayer, as our holy Father says in his Prologue, should be made with all possible fervour and earnestness (*instantissima*). For prayer, being the immediate and perfect act of charity to God, ought, like charity itself, to proceed from our whole heart and soul and strength. He therefore falls short of the perfect exercise of charity who employs his spirit, his sensitive nature, or his energies on anything but God, or that is not referred to Him or His love or glory. So that, if in our prayers we allow our thoughts to wander from God, or if we harbour in our hearts desires that would hinder the free tendency of our spirit to God in prayer, or if we employ our strength and energies upon anything that may not be directed to God in our prayers, we so far fail to attain to perfect fervour and earnestness in prayer.

We must not, however, be understood to mean that we

ought to force our bodily members or our sensible affections to concur in our prayers; or, again, that God requires this fervour to be always in our sensitive nature, for that is not in our power. Indeed, our sensitive nature is often opposed to our will, being commonly impatient of accompanying our spiritual acts, which so often mortify and contradict our natural desires and inclinations. Moreover, when sensible fervour intrudes into our recollections, especially in imperfect souls, it often tends more to weaken the operations of the spirit than to advance them, to foster self love than to increase and intensify divine love. Seat of this devotion.

It will suffice, then, if the fervour be in the superior will alone, without any apparent concurrence on the part of our sensitive nature. Our prayers are truly fervent when the will, out of a high esteem of this duty, resolutely and perseveringly pursues them, notwithstanding contradictions from within or discouragements from without. That must be a great fervour of spirit that overcomes the opposition of the inferior nature, and despises ease and natural contentment for the sake of the spiritual good to be derived from prayer. This is the good quality to which our Saviour refers in the parable of the man who went to his neighbour at midnight to borrow three loaves of bread to entertain a friend who had just arrived. He gives it a homely name —*audacity* (*improbitas*), or, as it is in the original, *impudence*. Yet this quality He requires in our prayers, and promises infallible success to it. This audacity or impudence implies importunate earnestness, a resolution to take no denial, nor to stand upon ceremony; and rather than return empty, to force a hearing even by exhausting the patience of the person to whom we address ourselves. It includes, therefore, great fervour and unceasing perseverance, qualities which are exhibited in a high degree by those who spend their whole life in one continual prayer, nay, in one only petition —to be united in will and affection to God alone.

But imperfect souls will be apt to suspect sometimes that their prayers are devoid of the qualities of fervour and perseverance; they will think they are without the former when they do not experience a feeling of tenderness in their sensitive nature; and the latter they will think is wanting whenever they are distracted in their prayers, however unwillingly. That a sound judgment may be formed of sensible devotion and distractions, I will note—(1) the good or evil effects which flow from the former, and (2) the remedies which may be applied to prevent inconveniences arising from the latter.

Sensible devotion twofold.

Sensible devotion is of two kinds. The sensible devotion of which we now speak is found in good but imperfect souls. It begins in the sensitive nature, causing much tenderness there, and mounting to the spirit produces good affections to God and to the Humanity and sufferings of our Lord, especially in discursive prayer. There is another kind of sensible devotion which belongs to perfect souls. This begins in the spirit, and filling it, overflows and descends into the sensitive nature, producing in it effects similar to the former kind of sensible devotion. There is little need to give instructions concerning the use of this devotion. Perfect souls walking in a clear light and firmly established in a generous love of the will towards God are not in danger of being carried away by the delights it produces in their inferior nature, nor of falling into spiritual gluttony, by which the affections may be withdrawn from God and adhere to such paltry gifts. I shall speak here only of that sensible devotion which is found in less perfect souls, because for them only are these instructions intended.

How to regard sensible devotion.

These souls should consider that, as sensible devotion is a gift of God, intended to encourage them to advance in His pure love, it should not be despised; but neither should it be over-highly prized. For as good effects flow from it when rightly used, so, on the contrary, without

discretion, it may prove very pernicious, and may plunge the soul deeply into self-love and her corrupt nature, and so produce an effect quite different from that for which it was intended. The soul, then, should separate what is profitable in this devotion from what is imperfect and dangerous, rejecting the latter and, with discretion, availing herself of the other for her spiritual advancement.

Certain effects of this devotion.

The effects of this devotion are often very obvious. It sometimes draws tears from the eyes, and produces a springing movement of the heart, as Harphius observes, like the leaping of a fish in the water. From such unusual agitation of the heart, a prickling sensation is sometimes caused in the head, and, if care be not taken to check the impetuous emotions, a reaction will follow which will plunge the soul into a state of torpid insensibility; the sweetness formerly experienced will be turned into sadness, dejection, and stupidity. Then will follow complaints that the soul is forsaken by God, which may lead to a desperate renunciation of all further quest of God. And the more she seeks to recover her former sensible devotion, the further she will be from it. Then, yielding to impatience, she will be rendered still more indisposed to prayer, more darkened in her understanding, and more stupefied in her affections.

All these troubles proceed from self-love and a craving for sensible sweetness. And if the sensible devotion be accompanied by apparitions or voices—for such souls are apt to imagine such things — it is to be feared more dangerous effects will follow. It will probably foster pride in themselves and a corresponding contempt of others.

It is not a proof of grace.

To diminish the self-esteem which incautious souls derive from sensible devotion, it may be noted that it is not always a sign of holiness, for we read of several wicked persons

who have enjoyed it. History makes mention of a certain tyrant, William, Prince of Juliers, who, at his devotions at midnight on the Feast of our Lord's Nativity, experienced two or three times such internal sweetness that he declared afterwards he would gladly purchase a repetition of it at the price of half his dominions. Yet after his death it was revealed to a holy person that he was in hell, and was condemned to torments equal to those of the wicked, persecuting Emperor Maxentius.

How imperfect souls may profit by it.

The root of sensible sweetness is often merely temperament. By God's permission the devil, too, will stir up this devotion in unmortified souls, knowing the bad use they will make of it, either to augment pride or presumptuously to undertake mortifications above their strength. In a short time, their strength being exhausted, they become unable to correspond with Divine grace, or to discharge the necessary duties of their state. When this happens, sweetness of devotion ceases and gives place to anguish, scruples, timidity, and sometimes even to desperation. Devout souls, then, should be on their guard lest through want of watchfulness they incur these disorders. Hence, Harphius earnestly advises these souls to moderate the impetuosity of their desires to God; for if they indulge their affections to the full extent, they will soon become exhausted and unable to perform even necessary duties.

The good which imperfect souls should derive from sensible devotion, when God gives it, is this: without resting in it, they should make it a means to establish a solid love of God in the superior soul, and a firm resolution never to desist from seeking Him by internal spiritual ways even in times of desolation and aridity.

If they make this use of it, though it proceed from the devil himself, no harm will come of it. The soul is most secure when, despising the pleasure of sensible devotion, she endeavours to direct the superior will quietly and resolutely

towards God. By this means security may be had also in doubtful cases of visions or ecstasies.

Tears to be repressed.

As regards tears, a common result of sensible devotion, the soul should be careful not to give them free scope, whether they are occasioned by pity for our Lord's sufferings or sorrow for her own sins. In all cases it is better to repress them, for besides the harm which may be done by impairing the health, they submerge the soul in her sensitive nature and do little to advance her in true love of God. They also impede the uplifting of the spirit by clouding the mind, so that the soul cannot discover her secret faults or the best way to keep herself from going astray. Let her, therefore, exercise the devotion in the superior soul and will whence comes all merit, and where her acts are performed with quietness and stillness, and at the same time more efficaciously than in her sensitive nature.

Perfect souls in little danger.

In perfect souls it is otherwise. When God by an extraordinary grace bestows on them the gift of tears, as He did on St. Arsenius, from whom they are said to have flowed almost continually, they begin in the spirit, whose operations they do not impede, but rather promote. Such tears flow like a shower of rain into a fleece of wool (*tanquam pluvia in vellus*), without any disturbance or bitterness in the inferior nature. This is a grace rarely if ever granted to imperfect souls. Those, therefore, upon whom it is bestowed may without danger yield to it. It can flow from God alone, and instead of depressing the spirit, it will rather, on the contrary, draw the sensitive nature upward into the spirit, causing it to concur in the exercises of divine love; so that the soul may say with David: '*My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God*,' the sensitive nature finding its delight in the love and service of God without any prejudice to the spirit. The way to attain to this admirable sensible devotion is by gently repressing and esteeming lightly the devotion which is sensible in its origin.

Prayer of aridity.

We may here note another temper in prayer—a temper in which the inferior soul is not merely inactive but is opposed to the acts of the spirit, finding much discomfort in them. The whole prayer in this case seems to be made by the spirit, the heart or sensitive appetite experiencing much bitterness in it, and the imagination in a measure refusing to suggest the images needful for the exercise, except in so far as the superior soul, by virtue of its dominion over it, is able to constrain it.

Benefits of this prayer.

There are few souls that give themselves to internal prayer who do not at times find themselves indisposed to it, experiencing great obscurity in the mind and insensibility in the affections. If imperfect souls are not well instructed and prepared, they will at such times be in danger of falling into dejection, and will perhaps be deterred from pursuing prayer altogether. They will be apt to think their recollections are to no purpose and their actuations towards God are loss of time—better, therefore, to employ their time in some other way.

Indeed, some souls are conducted by Almighty God altogether by the prayer of aridity. They find no sensible pleasure in their recollections, but, on the contrary, continued pain and contradiction. And yet, by a secret grace and courage imprinted deeply in the spirit they resolutely break through all difficulties and continue as best they can in their internal exercises, to the great advancement of their spirit.

It will be morally impossible for any souls but such as have a good propensity for internal exercises of the spirit to continue constantly in their recollections when aridities and obscurities continue for a long time. It is this propensity, assisted by grace, that holds them to their recollections, and that enables them to bear up in all their difficulties.

Causes of aridity.

Almighty God sometimes permits His servants to experience these aridities for their trial. But, ordinarily

speaking, they are associated with certain temperaments, especially with the temperament which is naturally best suited for the exercise of the affections. Such temperaments are very susceptible to change of weather or in the humours of the body, for sensible affections are much more influenced by such conditions than the operations of the understanding and will, which do not depend so much upon the body. Whenever such conditions arise these souls experience internal distress, and their state is all the more painful because they cannot help themselves by meditation, to which they are ordinarily indisposed. For this reason devout women are particularly subject to these distressing aridities.

Its effects on vocal prayer and meditation.

These discouragements arise least in vocal prayer, which suits all kinds of spirits and temperaments, whether they can discourse or not, and whether they can produce internal acts of the will from images formed in the mind, or not. Souls at all times, no matter how they are physically disposed, can derive more or less profit from vocal prayer.

Nor is the prayer of meditation, in those for whom it is proper, much afflicted with aridities, except, perhaps, towards the end of prayer, when the soul endeavours to draw good affections; then the heart may sometimes remain unmoved. However, those who practise meditation may find a remedy by abandoning the attempt and by having recourse to acts of the will, or they may return to their internal discourse.

Aridity more profitable than sensible devotion.

The pain and anguish which souls suffer from these aridities are very great; their state is a kind of continual martyrdom. The merit, therefore, of perseverance is very great, and souls to whom God vouchsafes such constancy will find their exercises more secure and profitable, however distasteful, than if they had overflowed with sensible affections. Indeed, every kind of good is obtained by prayer of aridity courageously prosecuted. All virtues are exercised in it. It is prayer, and a most efficacious mortification, too.

The remedy for aridity.

The only effectual remedy against the inconveniences caused by aridities is a generous resolution not to seek natural contentment in internal exercises, nor to quit them on account of any dulness or coldness. Let souls try to do the best they can, and they will find that their spiritual progress in true love of God will not be in the least hindered, but rather advanced, by the intractability of their corrupt nature.

Independence of superior soul.

A courageous and effectual resolution may quite well consist with these discouragements. For the spirit whose operations do not much depend upon the physical disposition, may, in the midst of aridities and obscurities, perform its functions with great efficacy. The intellectual faculties are at all times capable of illumination, and the will of receiving grace and strength from God. And the light and grace which we receive at such times are far purer and more divine than when the sensible affections abound, for then the light and grace are communicated directly to the spirit. Consequently the operations performed under those conditions are more noble and meritorious. Moreover, our inferior nature cannot easily mingle its interests in them, so that they may be confidently esteemed supernatural and divine. The true and essential profit of the soul consists in the light and love of the spirit. The light and love, therefore, which is obtained with so much difficulty and in such a conflict with the inferior nature is far purer, more generous, and more firmly rooted in the soul than that which is procured by the exercise of sensible affections. Moreover, there is all the time a continual combat against self-love and all its most secret, deeply-hidden snares; so that the virtues becoming rooted in the depth of the spirit, and being produced amid the sharpest temptations, are in little danger of being extinguished by subsequent trials.

To obtain the necessary courage and firmness of mind, such souls will do well to avail themselves of the best

motives and affections they can find or devise. They should also frequently incite themselves to the love of God by ejaculatory prayers such as these: 'O my God, when shall I love Thee as Thou deservest? When shall I love as I am loved by Thee? Oh that I were free from myself and might love Thee only! Exert Thy power and come; come, O Lord, and delay not. Arise, O Lord, and let Thy enemies be scattered,' and so forth. How to obtain courage.

With such affections let the devout soul exercise herself as best she can during her recollections; and, although she should experience no sensible pleasure, she may rest assured that God will not fail to accept and abundantly reward her goodwill and promote her spiritual welfare in the way He thinks best. As He has given her the generous courage to serve Him without present wages, He will heap rewards upon her, in the next life at least, and infinitely beyond her expectations. And she ought to account it a proof of His special love that He has selected her for a martyr of love and a soldier to whose courage He commits the most difficult undertakings.

When internal distress in prayer is so intense that, apparently, the soul can only keep herself in an attitude of prayer, her worship seeming so utterly devoid of the spirit of devotion that she thinks it to be positively injurious to God, let her be patient and abstain from disquieting herself with complaints. Especially let her not seek consolation in creatures or recreations at the times appointed for recollection, and then all will be right with her. God will require no more of her than she is well able to perform: He knows that it is not always in her power to subdue her rebellious nature. On her part she must be careful to withhold her consent from the sinful suggestions of her corrupt nature, then there will be no danger. And for what she cannot do let her humble and resign herself. Such a disposition will in itself be a very efficacious prayer. How to act under trial.

Prayer of imperfect souls in aridity.

It must not, however, be supposed that the internal prayer of imperfect souls in times of aridity is a truly pure spiritual prayer, for this exercise as yet is still in sense. However, though still in sense, it is in the nobler part of it, and tending towards the spirit; so that the soul enjoys a clearer and purer light than when she prays with abundant affections. Moreover, the stronger the propensity in such souls to introversion, the quicker do they raise themselves to that clear superior region of light; because such a propensity and aptitude to internal ways draw the persons endowed with them more and more deeply towards the spirit, in whose perfect operations consists the consummation of an internal life.

CHAPTER V

DISTRACTIONS

We have now to consider the principal obstacle to perseverance, which was the second requisite quality in prayer, viz., distractions. Devout souls are often much afflicted by them in their recollections, and they are thereby exposed to troublesome scruples. Distractions are caused by images, which often against our will press upon our imagination and withdraw the mind from contemplating God, and the affections from embracing Him by love during the time set apart for prayer. Obstacle to perseverance.

Under the term 'distractions' are not comprehended all interruptions from an actual tending to God. Our infirmity often requires us to indulge in a discreet relaxation, that our minds may be refreshed, and that we may afterwards be able to produce more efficacious affections. Those authors, therefore, are not to be commended who exact of imperfect souls a continual attention to the Divine presence. They do not sufficiently consider the weakness and incapacity of souls, especially in these days. The distractions here meant are such as are involuntary and occur at times when we apply ourselves to prayer either vocal or mental.

It is an effect of original sin (much increased by actual sin) that souls are more or less subject to this disorder. By sin the due subordination of the sensitive faculties, the imagination, memory, and appetite, to the superior soul is Distractions are effect of original sin.

impaired; so that reason has not that absolute dominion over them which it exercised in a state of innocence. The sensitive faculties often wander towards objects not prescribed by reason, and sometimes seduce and almost compel reason itself to comply and take part in their disorders. Moreover, the body, being gross and material, cannot long endure that the soul, its companion, should continue at her proper exercise, by which she becomes almost a stranger to the body, contradicting its inclinations and desires. Till the soul, then, by the practice of spiritual operations, is enabled at pleasure to command the inferior faculties, or to withdraw herself from the images suggested by them, they will tend to depress the spirit and engage it with the necessities and desires of the sensitive nature. Even perfect souls will not be able to continue for long at the height of the spirit.

Two kinds of distractions.

The distractions which, generally speaking, are most hurtful, and to be avoided, are (apart from sinful objects) those concerning objects to which we cling with affection. By such distracting objects not only is the mind turned away from God, but the heart also is carried inordinately to creatures.

As for thoughts about merely vain objects for which we have little or no affection, and which proceed altogether from the instability of the imagination, imperfect souls should not allow themselves to be discouraged by them, however importunate they may be during their recollection. Even the most secluded and abstracted souls must expect to suffer now and then from them.

A remedy.

The most effectual remedy to prevent these distractions is to cut off with prudence and dexterity the occasions which give rise to such thoughts as recur most frequently and pertinaciously to the mind in prayer. Special attention, too, should be given to the objects to which the soul adheres with inordinate affection. Also the practice of abstraction

and voluntary disengagement from unnecessary business is requisite, and a careful restraining of our affections from wandering abroad and fixing themselves upon external objects. Certain it is that if by the exercise of mortification and prayer we would restrain our affections from creatures and fix them continually on God alone, we should scarcely ever have cause to complain of distractions; for experience shows that we can easily and constantly fix our thoughts on the objects we love. Perseverance in prayer and mortification are the most certain instruments to increase divine love and diminish inordinate love for ourselves and creatures; consequently they are the surest remedies against distractions.

Other suggestions.

If in spite of every care the distractions still persist, the most effectual way to prevent serious inconvenience from them is: (1) To take reasonable pains in contradicting and expelling them; yet to forbear from an over-violent and anxious resistance to them under the impression that they may be thus extinguished. Such eager contention with them, by exciting the mind, makes the images more active, and rather multiplies than diminishes them; at least, it stamps them more deeply on the imagination. Let the devout soul endeavour, according to the expression of the author of the *Cloud*, to look over their shoulders, as though she looked for some other object which stood beyond and above them, viz., God. (2) Let her also retain in her mind and superior will a strong resolution, even in the very thick of her distractions, not to relinquish her prayer, but to persevere in it to the best of her power. The resolution should be put into execution with all possible quietness, stillness, and patience, and she must not allow herself to be troubled with fears and scruples, as if the distractions came by her own fault; often they are caused, or at least increased, by her state of health, or the natural instability of the imagination. (3) Sometimes it may be requisite for the soul, when

she cannot pursue her recollection satisfactorily, to change her prayer into acts of patience and quiet resignation, and to suffer without murmuring the affliction and visitation at God's hands. By acting thus she perhaps will make more advance in pure spiritual prayer than if she had had no distractions at all. Besides, such prayer being made with an actual contradiction of her natural inclinations is a very purifying mortification. Moreover, perseverance in this practice will bring her to the pure prayer of the will, in which the will is firmly united to God without any perceptible concurrence or participation of the understanding—nay, even while the understanding and the imagination are wandering and distracted.

And surely it should be of immense comfort to the soul to know that her will, which is her principal faculty, and, indeed, all in all, may be united to God in the midst of distractions, temptations, and desolations. Moreover, while so united, so far from receiving harm from her distractions, she will by their means increase in grace; so that, though she receives no extraordinary illuminations, nor any natural satisfaction in such distracted prayers, yet she gets that for which such illuminations and delights are bestowed, viz., a secret but effectual grace to adhere to God and to resign herself to Him in all His dealings with her. Grace obtained by such painful abnegation of self is far more secure and meritorious in God's eyes than when it comes by way of illuminations and sensible consolations. For in that way our corrupt nature is transcended, and self-love is contradicted and subdued, even when it attacks the soul most insidiously and dangerously by pretending that all its solicitude and anxiety about distractions flow from divine love and care for the soul's progress in the spiritual life. Lastly, by this way charity and all divine virtues are deeply rooted in the spirit, being produced and established by the very

means which the devil uses to hinder their production in negligent, tepid souls, or by which he destroys their virtues when they are beginning in a measure to grow.

As for the methods and expedients to be used in special cases and circumstances, no one but God can teach them. Experience and perseverance will undoubtedly procure for the soul sufficient light and grace to act for the best.

Distractions of perfect and imperfect souls.

A distinction may here be noted between the distractions of perfect souls and of imperfect souls. In perfect souls, distractions proceed from an unwilling infirmity of the faculties of cognition. But in imperfect souls they arise rather from some degree of inordinate affection to the objects which cause the distractions. The soul, therefore, that has made good progress has little difficulty in putting distractions away as soon as she observes them; and without contending with them, she forthwith unites herself with her superior will to God, even while her knowing faculties are busy about impertinent objects; whereas imperfect souls, in the inferior degrees of prayer, requiring as yet an express and perceptible use of the imagination and understanding, must necessarily incur some loss from distractions, for those faculties cannot be employed simultaneously on different objects that have no subordination or relation to one another.

Divine inspiration.

A few words must now be added on the third quality or condition of true internal affective prayer, viz., Divine inspiration; for if prayer proceeds not from this source it is of little efficacy or merit. In the general division of internal prayer the title of infused prayer was appropriated to the prayer of perfect contemplation. The meaning of this was, not that the influence of the Holy Spirit is confined to perfect contemplation, but that perfect contemplation is simply infused—that is, the soul does not dispose herself for it by any deliberate preparation or election: whereas in the inferior degrees of prayer there

is necessary a precedent and concomitant effort on the part of the soul; she must make choice of matter for prayer, and elicit corresponding affections, because the Holy Spirit, as yet, is not so dominant and operative in the soul as to impel her to pray, or rather to breathe forth prayers in her and by her. But in all cases prayer should proceed from the Holy Spirit; as St. Bernard most truly says: 'That prayer is a tepid prayer which is not animated by Divine inspiration'; and St. Augustine: 'It is a special gift of God's Holy Spirit to be able to pray aright.'

The reason for the necessity of Divine inspiration in prayer is thus expressed by St. Paul: '*We know not how to pray as we ought, and therefore the Spirit of God helps our infirmity. Indeed,*' says he, '*the Spirit Himself makes requests in us and for us,*' and often '*with groans which cannot be expressed,*' and which the soul herself cannot conceive. It is this inspiration which gives a supernatural character to our prayers, and makes them worthy of being heard by Almighty God.

But of this subject much has already been said, and more will follow when treating of the degrees of prayer, especially the perfect prayer of aspirations, where it will be seen that the character of these aspirations will vary according to the natural propensities of souls; so that souls that are naturally inclined to introversion are usually moved by God to seek Him by pure spiritual operations, without images or motives, but this gradually as the soul makes progress. It will also be shown how necessary is liberty of spirit and freedom from too precise methods and nice rules, if the soul is to dispose herself for these Divine inspirations. I will, therefore, forbear from enlarging on this subject here.

Exhortation.

A due consideration of these admirable qualities and heavenly fruits of internal affective prayer should give us

an immense esteem for it, and cause us to value it above every other employment. It was a thorough appreciation of this that made the ancient hermit, Jacob (in Theodoret, *De Vit*, P.P.), resolutely persist in refusing to interrupt his appointed prayer or to postpone it for any business or civilities whatever. When the hour for prayer was come, he would bid all to depart, saying, 'I came to this solitude not to benefit other men's souls, but to purify my own by prayer.'

CHAPTER VII

APOLOGY OF FATHER BALTAZAR ALVAREZ, S.J.

Internal prayer regarded with suspicion.

So far from being a just reproach against this admirable gift of God, internal prayer of the will, it may be esteemed rather a witness to its excellence, that it has found opponents among such as are strict and zealous about religious observance, and even among learned men. God forbid that this should be imputed to malice or envy. It should rather be ascribed to want of experience in the mysterious ways in which God often leads His special servants. The calumnies and persecutions endured by St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, Suso, and others, when God enlightened and directed them to communicate this knowledge to the world, are well known. They accepted opposition as a certain proof that the light was from God, that it was beneficial to souls, and therefore hateful to the devil.

Exemplified in B. Alvarez, S.J.

Among the later masters of pure spiritual contemplative prayer, no one is more deserving of our esteem than Father Baltazar Alvarez of the Society of Jesus. He was highly esteemed by St. Teresa, to whom he afforded much comfort in her troubles and difficulties. The special interest of his story arises from the fact that by occasion of his trial and examination the suspicions and allegations against his manner of prayer were entirely cleared up and dispelled.

As the incident supports and confirms the whole substance of this book, we shall make no apology for inserting it here.

This venerable priest spent some fifteen years in the diligent practice of meditation and the spiritual exercises peculiar to the society of which he was a member. But deriving little spiritual profit from them, and being much tormented with doubts and dissatisfaction, he was at last powerfully guided by God's Holy Spirit to abandon meditation and to betake himself to the serious practice of prayer immediately in the will. By corresponding with this Divine impulse he presently received abundance of light and a perfect remedy for his anguish and perplexities.

But his internal troubles ceasing, outward difficulties began. His brethren and companions perceiving that he walked in ways unknown to them, earnestly demanded that an examination of this new spirit should be made. So loud were these complaints that they reached the ears of the General Everard Mercurian, who resided in Rome. An order was made by the General that Alvarez's study should be sealed and afterwards searched, and his papers examined by some learned fathers appointed for the purpose. No matter for accusation was discovered, but, on the contrary, much for edification. A second order came from the General bidding him to make a full statement of the order and manner of his prayer.

This command called for a free and ingenuous Apology for himself, the substance of which is recorded with commendable candour by Louis de Puente, S.J., a disciple of Alvarez and author of his life.

In his Apology he humbly declares: 'That for nearly sixteen years he had laboured as one who tills the ground without reaping any fruit; that his heart was much straitened with grief; that he wanted the talents for which he saw others esteemed; and particularly that he was troubled at not being allowed sufficient time for prayer. But this

temptation he overcame, resolving to employ no more time in prayer than holy obedience permitted, and rejecting foolish ambition to excel therein, and all pretence to divine favour, which others more deserving enjoyed. Still he found that his defects multiplied and rather disquieted than humbled him. Indeed they almost made it impossible for him to comply with the internal counsels and invitations of God. Moreover, on account of his unquietness, the defects of others under his rule much increased his disorder; so that he judged it a matter of right government to make his subjects perform all things like himself, with a melancholy dejection of mind.

'At the end of fourteen years he was exercising a manner of prayer by which he placed himself in God's presence as a beggar, saying little, and only expecting an alms. As he could not keep his mind fixed on God, but reflected on himself and his troubles, dejection and even utter despair of ever approaching to perfection began to increase. God had shown him no marks of His favour, which it seems he expected, but (as he confesses) very foolishly; for coming to God with such an expectation was a greater fault than his former desertion of Him. Indeed, by this he was brought to such extreme confusion that for very shame he dared not for some time say anything to God in prayer, but only that He would punish, forgive, and assist him.

'After sixteen years were passed he found his heart suddenly and unexpectedly changed and dilated. His disquietude vanished, and his soul, freed from all created things, was filled with an astonishing joy, like that of those who say: "Lord, when we see Thee, we have seen all good, and are entirely satiated." Here he found himself in the company of persons destined to beatitude: the way seemed plain and easy; now he received a spiritual discretion to distinguish between what is precious and what is vile. New notions and the apprehension of truths were

given him; they fed his soul with joy and peace. Such illuminations were somewhat rare at first; but at the time of writing his Apology they were become much more frequent.

'Instead of the anxiety which he formerly had, on account of his unsatisfied ambition of eminence, now he was content to live under the cross; now he so humbled himself that he was covered with confusion in the presence of anyone. Though he honoured all men, he found they were not at all needful to him, as formerly they appeared to be; that it was better and easier for him to converse with God alone.

'From this time he perceived that God had given him an internal light for regulating his own affairs, and the persons under him, even in the smallest matters. Formerly solicitude about the discharge of his offices disquieted and oppressed his spirit; now he found that all business was much better performed by casting his care on God, and by putting it out of his thoughts till the time came to execute his duty; so that in the midst of a throng of cares he lived without care. He was not now, as formerly, troubled that he had not sufficient time for prayer, because he found that God gives more in one hour to mortified, resigned souls than to others in many days; and he found more profit to his spirit by a faithful discharge of employments imposed by God, than in leisure and spiritual reading of his own choice.

'A perception of his faults now did him good, by humbling him and making him distrustful of himself, and confident in God, knowing that no defects but those deliberately persisted in hinder God's counsels and designs for our perfection. As for the defects of those under his government, he discovered that it was great folly to disquiet himself about them, and that his former desire of making them sad and melancholy was the result of his own impatience.

'His prayer now was to place himself in God's presence, both inwardly and outwardly present to him, and to rejoice with Him permanently and habitually. Now he understood the difference between perfect and imperfect souls on the point of enjoying the Divine presence, expressed by St. Thomas (22 q. 24, a. 9 *ad* 3, and opusc. 63). He perceived that those are blind who seek God with anxiety of mind, and call upon Him as if He were absent. Being already His temples, in which His Divine Majesty reposes, they ought to enjoy Him actually and internally present in them. Sometimes in his prayers he pondered awhile on a text of Scripture, according to the inspirations and lights then given him; sometimes he remained in repose and silence before God. This manner of prayer he accounted a great treasure; for then his heart, his desires, his secret intentions, his knowledge, and all his powers spoke; and God understood this mute language, and with one look could expel his defects, kindle his desires, and give him wings to mount spiritually to Him. Now he took pleasure in nothing but in suffering contentedly the will of God, which was as welcome to Him in aridities as in consolations. He was unwilling to know more than God freely discovered to him, or to make a more rapid progress, or to travel by ways other than those which God Himself prescribed to him. If at any time his heart, out of a natural infirmity, groaned under his burden, his answer would be: "Is not that good which God wills, and will it not always continue to be so?" or, "Will God cease to perform His own will because thou dost not judge it to be for thy good?" In conclusion, his constant comfort was to see himself a sufferer in God's presence, and to be treated in all things according to His Divine pleasure.

'If, sometimes forsaking this quiet prayer to which God had brought him, he tried to apply himself to his former exercises of meditation, he found that God reprehended

and restrained him internally. For his greater assurance he searched mystic authors, St. Dionysius the Areopagite (*De Myst. Theol.*, c. 1), St. Augustine (*Epistol.* 19), St. Gregory (*Mor.*, lib. 30, 26, etc.), and St. Bernard (in *Cant. Serm.*, 55, etc.). From these authors he satisfied himself that as rest is the end of motion and a quiet habitation the end of laborious building, so this peaceful prayer and quiet enjoyment of God in spirit is the end of the imperfect busy prayer of meditation; that all internal discourse with the understanding, therefore, was to cease whenever God enabled souls to perform acts purely by the will; and that to do otherwise would be as if one should always be preparing something to eat and yet refuse to taste that which has been prepared. By this prayer of the will the Holy Spirit of wisdom, with all the admirable perfections described in the Book of Wisdom (chap. viii.), is obtained, and with it perfect liberty.

'Then he proceeds to show by reasons the surpassing excellence of this reposeful prayer of the will: (1) That though there is no reasoning of the mind in it, yet the soul, silently presenting herself before God with a firm faith, practically tells God, to Whom all things are manifest, her desires, and withal exercises every virtue, humbling herself before Him, loving Him alone, and believing that, by forsaking her own ways and constantly holding to God's, all good things will come to her. (2) That in this prayer the soul attains to a far more worthy and sublime notion of God. (3) That this still, quiet prayer may be practised more perseveringly and at greater length than the tiring prayer of meditation; indeed, it may come to be continual, without interruption. (4) That all the fruits of meditation, humility, obedience, and so forth, are more efficaciously and perfectly acquired by this prayer than by that which is joined with inward discourse (5) True it is that the exercises instituted by St. Ignatius were more suitable for souls

generally than this; yet this ought to be esteemed proper for those whom God has called and prepared for it. This was St. Ignatius's own practice; for though in his less perfect state he pursued the imperfect exercises instituted by him, yet afterwards he was exalted to this sublime prayer by which he suffered divine things. And as no one ought to attempt the exercise of this pure prayer till God has called and prepared him for it, so no one, when called, should be forbidden it, as Osanna says in his *Alphabet.* Whoever forbids such souls the use of it will have a very serious account to render to God. Indeed, a spiritual writer says that God will shorten the lives of Superiors who presume to discourage and frighten souls from these internal ways, unless they desist.'

This is the substance of the account which the venerable Baltazar Alvarez gave to the General after a retirement of fifteen days with humble confession of his own defects and misery, and with the praise of God's goodness towards him.

Besides this account, he wrote a short statement in which he treated more fully of the prayer of rest and silence, and made answer to some of the objections raised by his brethren against this prayer. In substance it was as follows:

It was objected that one who exercised this prayer, which did not admit of the use of the understanding by discursive meditation, seems to spend his time in doing nothing. His time might be better employed in external acts of virtue.

To this he answered that, though the activity of the understanding is in a way suspended, the soul is far from idle; she performs what St. Bernard calls the business of all businesses, for the stream of her holy affections freely flows by loving, admiring, adoring, congratulating God; by resigning and offering herself to Him, contemplated with the eye of faith; and this sometimes in a few words, sometimes in silence. In a word, the soul behaves herself according to the various affections which the unction of the

Holy Spirit, who is her principal master, inspires her with, according to the words of St. Dionysius the Areopagite to Timotheus: 'Turn thyself to the beam of Divine light.' From this proceeds that admirable union which he calls 'The union of the unknown with the unknown,' the supreme height of mystic theology, and which, without experience, cannot even be conceived.

The second objection is, that to leave meditation in the expectation of receiving Divine inspirations and illuminations seems to be tempting God and favouring the errors of the Illuminati.

It is answered that this prayer, exercised by holy affections without mental discourse, can (except in extraordinary cases) be exercised only by souls who have practised discursive prayer. And they that ascend from meditation to this quiet prayer do so under the guidance of a supernatural light; and in that state they do not desire or expect revelations, but simply acknowledge the Divine presence in the soul and produce holy affections to Him. Nor is this practice in any way akin to that of the Illuminati. They, without a call from God, without preparation, presumptuously aspired to extraordinary gifts in prayer, remaining in a distracted idleness, misspending their time in the expectation of something supernatural, and doing nothing to correct their inordinate affections. When an immortified soul attempts this prayer she is forced to desist from it. No one who deliberately resists God's Holy Spirit, the Spirit of purity, sanctity, humility, and conformity to the Divine Will, can appear in peaceful security before His Divine presence.

Next, it is objected that there is no way to discover when this prayer is undertaken by Divine inspiration and when out of presumption and a desire to enjoy spiritual gifts, which nourishes self-love.

It is answered that it will be evident by its effects as a

tree is known by its fruits. The effect of this prayer when practised in response to a Divine call is to render the heart soft and pliable to the Divine Will, resigned to accept all things from His hands, and confident to obtain all good from Him to whom the soul has given herself wholly. It leads her to imitate our Lord, the pattern of all perfection; to renounce self-will, and so forth. Surely a prayer which teaches such things is from God.

But, it is urged, they who practise this prayer are self-opinionated, adhere to their own ways, and esteeming themselves spiritual, despise others and refuse to submit themselves to the judgment of Superiors.

To this it is answered that these defects are not to be imputed to the prayer, but to the imperfections and frailty of those who do not practise it as they ought. This, then, is not sufficient ground to condemn the prayer, no more than meditation should be condemned because such faults, and even greater ones, are committed by some who practise it. They are sometimes liable to a vain esteem of themselves for some bright or clever thought elicited by their reasonings during meditation. Even the Sacraments are sometimes abused, yet they are not on that account forbidden. Superiors, therefore, unless perhaps to test their subjects, should not prohibit them to pray as God, by His inspiration, may direct them. If Superiors should do so, they must expect that God will exact a strict account from them. However, it would be a fault in such cases for the subject to disobey; but until such a prohibition is made, it surely must be lawful for the subject to follow God's internal directions. Nor is it presumption, if by the light of his experience he thinks he is better able to judge of the matter than those who have had no experience in it at all; nor is it pride to acknowledge the gifts of God, as the Apostle observes.

Again, it is objected that some are so given up to this

manner of prayer that they are always in a kind of ecstasy. They are so delighted with the pleasure they derive from it that they quite forget the obligations of charity, obedience, and exercise of virtue. These they neglect that they may immerse themselves in a prayer which produces no truths which may be profitably communicated to others. All this is contrary to the institute of St. Ignatius. Moreover, many who practise this kind of prayer become subject to ill-health, which renders them incapable of complying with the obligations of their state.

No wonder, he answers, if some defects are found in these persons, for no one is entirely free from them. But these defects are not to be ascribed to the prayer, but to the improper use of it. Contemplation itself urges souls to the exercise of charity when necessity and duty require it, but not otherwise. Hence St. Augustine: 'Love of truth seeks a holy leisure' (*De Civit. D.*, lib. 19, c. 19). The pressure of charity makes us undertake due employments; but at other times we ought to remain in the fruition and contemplation of Truth, according to the teaching of St. Gregory (Job, cap. vii.), and St. Bernard (Ser. 57 in Cant.). And though the soul by meditation may discover finer thoughts, still by this prayer the will is more abundantly enriched with virtues; and it is virtue alone that renders the soul acceptable to God. As for corporal infirmities, they proceed only from an indiscreet use of prayer. For being a prayer of stillness and repose, it is far less injurious to the health and head than the laborious exercise of the imagination in meditation. Hence holy persons who practise it are able to continue longer in it.

The sixth objection raised is that this manner of prayer draws the soul wholly in upon itself; that devotion to the Saints, and praying for common or particular needs, is too much neglected.

To this he answers that, as vocal prayers and voluntary

exercises are only means to bring souls to perfect prayer of quiet, according to St. Thomas's teaching (22, q. 83, a. 13), they ought to cease when the soul finds herself full of fervent affections. Nor does this prove disesteem of such means, but only a right understanding and use of them. It is said of St. Ignatius that by long practice of vocal prayer he reached such inward familiarity with God that he could not proceed with the Divine Office, so that his companions had to obtain a dispensation for him, so great was the copious communication of ardent affections and graces which God bestowed upon him. Nor should we think that souls, by following the Divine guidance in pure prayer, omit requisite petitions. On the contrary, as their necessities are known to God, Who sees the desires of their hearts, they obtain their desires much more efficaciously than if they had expressly asked for them. And the reason they do not give expression to their desires is because they wish to employ their affections in prayers which they know to be more acceptable to God. As for devotions to the Saints, the Saints account it their chief honour that God should be most honoured.

Finally, it was said that diverse methods of prayer might cause factions in the Society; but to this he replied that the perfect may lawfully practise ways not common to the imperfect, without fear of divisions or wish to despise or contradict others.

The result of the storm raised against Alvarez ended personally very satisfactorily. After a strict examination, his innocence and truth were disclosed by his writings, and his humble patience was apparent in his whole conduct. The General esteemed him so highly that he preferred him to two offices successively of the greatest dignity and trust in Spain. Nevertheless, the General not wishing that his manner of prayer should be generally adopted, wrote to the Provincial, and directed him to see that Superiors assisted

the religious to acquire and entertain a high esteem for the practices and manner of prayer prescribed in their exercises and conformable to their institute.*

* Father Cressey afterwards modified his view. He writes in his preface to *Sancta Sophia:* 'I think myself obliged to acquaint thee, dear reader, that by two books published of late by two reverend fathers of the Society, and perused by me since the writing and printing of that passage, I find that the said orders of the General are not, at least of late, so rigidly interpreted as formerly they were.'

CHAPTER VIII

DEGREES OF PRAYER

Degrees of Prayer.

SPIRITUAL writers usually begin with the division of prayer into its several degrees. But I have thought it best to reserve the consideration of the degrees of prayer to this place. For though the soul ascends, in proportion to her progress, in the practice of all duties of the spiritual life generally (in mortification as well as prayer), still her advance should be measured principally by her progress in prayer. As this becomes purer and more spiritual, so may she be esteemed to have advanced in all duties and virtues disposing to contemplation and perfection.

Spiritual writers have not all used the same terms or the same divisions of prayer; but the most ancient and usual practice is to divide it into three states: (1) Beginners; (2) Proficients; and (3) the Perfect. These writers do not clearly indicate the distinctive marks which separate these states from one another; but the whole spiritual course is usually divided by them into—(1) The Purgative way, in which sinful defects are removed from the soul. (2) The Illuminative way, by which Divine grace and virtues are introduced. (3) The Unitive way, by which the soul attains to the end of her spiritual exercises, union with God in spirit by perfect charity.

Father Benet Canfield* makes the Divine Will the sole

* William Benet Fytche, alias Canfield, was born at Canfield in Essex about 1562. He was brought up a Puritan, but embraced the

object of our exercises, and divides His Will into external, internal, and essential or eminent Will. He virtually divides all exercises according to those three notions. Others, again, divide all exercises into active and contemplative. It is of no importance which is selected, provided it is rightly understood.

Perfection measured by degrees of prayer.

But the degrees of perfection in relation to all the duties of an internal life are best measured by the degrees of internal prayer. These degrees, however, differ much in nature one from another, and should rather be called states of prayer. Hence Barbanson, the learned and experienced author of *Secrets Sentiers de l'Amour Divin*, divides the progress in a contemplative life according to the progress in prayer, which he says, has these degrees: (1) The exercises of the understanding in meditation. (2) The exercise of the will and affections without meditation. (3) The state in which the soul has an experimental perception of the Divine presence in her. (4) The great desolation. (5) The state where the soul receives a sublime manifestation of God in the summit of her spirit. (6) Then, after many risings and fallings (which are to be found in all the degrees), the soul enters into the divine and secret ways of perfection.

This order appears to be the most natural, and in harmony with reason and experience; we shall, therefore, follow it, with this difference, however, that the last four degrees will be united into one. Thus we shall distinguish three degrees of prayer: (1) Discursive prayer or meditation. (2) The prayer of forced immediate acts or affections

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Catholic faith at the age of twenty-four. After his conversion he went to France and joined the Capuchins, receiving the name of Benedict in religion. He was twice elected Provincial, and was reckoned one of the most eloquent preachers of his day. He wrote several treatises on prayer and the spiritual life, amongst them being 'The Holy Will of God: A Short Rule of Perfection,' which has been translated by Father Collins.

of the will. (3) The prayer of pure active contemplation or aspirations flowing from the soul, as it were, naturally, without any force, powerfully and immediately directed and moved by the Holy Spirit. This third degree constitutes properly the prayer of contemplation. There is no state of prayer beyond it. The distinctions made by Barbanson are probably the result of experience in his own soul, and may not be exactly the same in others; for God works in the souls of His servants according to His own good pleasure, and not according to methods drawn up by man.

Grounds of this division.

These, then, are the three degrees of internal prayer and correspond with the purgative, illuminative, and unitive way, commonly used by authors. The first consists largely of discourse in the understanding; the other two degrees are prayer of the will, but more especially the last degree. But before speaking of each degree in particular it will be of use to show the reasonableness of this division. It may be convincingly shown that, according to the dispensation of Divine grace to souls that tend to perfection, they are led through these degrees in this order and in no other. And this will hold good in the case even of souls that have never heard of any degrees of prayer, but without reading or learning have been conducted immediately by God's Holy Spirit in His internal ways.

First, it will be acknowledged, generally speaking, that when the soul passes from a negligent and worldly state to the serious pursuit of the spiritual life, though by virtue of that grace which moved her to change her life she is really in a state of justification, yet she will still retain a great measure of fear produced by the recollection of her former sins. There is also a strong inclination to sin and bad habits, and this will continue until overcome by the long practice of virtue and piety. Moreover, vain and sinful images possess the soul and distract her when she would set her mind on God, calling her to attend to the objects which

formerly absorbed her affections, and which still cause too much feeling of pleasure whenever they intrude themselves into her mind. And though upon reflection she resists and renounces them with her superior soul, yet the resistance is often so feeble that she sometimes is entangled and seduced; and at times she has grave reason to doubt whether she has not really consented to them.

The acknowledged remedy for this disordered condition is prayer. And the highest degree of prayer of which the soul is capable at present is a distracted vocal prayer, or discursive meditation in which the imagination and understanding are principally used. For although God has endowed the soul with true charity, yet vain images so abound in the mind, and vicious affections so predominate in the sensitive nature, that it is requisite to expel these images and store the imagination with good ones, and to turn the affections from earthly objects to spiritual things and to God. All this is done by inventing arguments and motives, especially motives of fear. The exercises, therefore, proper for the soul in this imperfect state are acts of sensible contrition for sin, caused by the consideration of its turpitude, the misery attending it, the certainty and uncertainty of death, the terrors of God's judgments, the horrors of hell, and the consideration that a price no less than the bloody Passion of the Son of God was requisite for the cleansing of the soul from sin. Such subjects as these will now be suitable matter for meditation; and the mortifications which should accompany it are such as are sensible, external, and suitable for the correction of more obvious defects.

When by such exercises the soul has been eased of her weight of sorrow, and begins to resist and hate sin rather from the motive of the love of God than from fear of His judgments, her discursive prayer turns to other subjects. Instead of the consideration of the judgment and hell, she

is more drawn to consider the charity, patience, and sufferings of our Lord, and derives comfort from meditation on the future joys promised and prepared for her. Although charity is now much increased in her she still stands in need of motives and considerations to set it in motion, and of holy images of divine things to withdraw her from the vain images which still distract her. She dwells with pleasure on the joys of heaven, the sublime mysteries of faith, the blessed Humanity of our Lord, and the glorious attributes of the Divinity. The mortifications corresponding with this state grow more internal. They are exercised about inward defects which are disclosed to her in prayer. While the soul continues in this kind of prayer and mortification, standing much in need of the frequent consideration of motives, she is still in the purgative way, though towards the end it is mingled with the illuminative.

Secondly, by perseverance in discursive prayer the soul will find in time that she stands in less need of inventing motives to induce her to exercise love of God. For good affections by constant exercise will now begin to move with facility, so that the mere thought of a good object will suffice to make her produce a good affection. Henceforth the soul, little by little, abandons discourse in prayer, and exercises her will immediately towards God. And here meditation ends, and the second and more perfect degree of prayer begins—the prayer of immediate acts of the will.

Now, when the soul, leading a reasonably abstracted life, has arrived at this manner of prayer, if she should continue to practise meditation, she will find herself unable to make much progress. Indeed, the extreme labour of inventing motives, which are now no longer necessary, and the restraint of methods and prescribed forms, will be so distracting, so devoid of comfort, so insupportable, that if she is hindered from following God's invitation to the exercise of the will, she will be in danger of abandoning

internal prayer altogether; whereas by pursuing God's call she will every day get more light to discover her secret inward defects, and grace to mortify and amend them. As to her mortification, it will be exercised rather by transcending and forgetting the objects of her inordinate affections than by direct combat against them. This state of prayer corresponds with what is commonly called the illuminative way, for in it the soul reflects little on herself or on the obscurity resulting from sin, but tends directly and immediately to God, by Whom she is enlightened and adorned with all virtues and graces.

In the third place, after long exercise in forced affections of the will to God, Who is now contemplated much more than formerly in the darkness and obscurity of a blind and naked faith, devoid of distinct and express images, the soul, little by little, will grow so well disposed to Him that she will stand in little need of forcing herself to produce good affections, or of prescribing for herself determinate forms of acts or affections. Indeed, divine love will now become so firmly established in the soul, so wholly filling and possessing it, that it will be, as it were, a new soul to her soul, constantly breathing forth fervent acts of love, as naturally almost as the lungs pour forth breath.

And here begins the state of pure contemplation, the end of all the exercises of an internal life. In this blessed state the upliftings and aspirations are so pure and spiritual that the soul herself is often unable to give an account of what she does. And no wonder; for they do not proceed from any forethought or election of her own, but are suggested to her by the Divine Spirit, Who wholly possesses her. Although in these sublime and blind elevations of the will the use of the imagination and understanding is not wholly excluded, yet their operation is so imperceptible that it is not surprising that many mystic writers, speaking from personal experience, have said that in pure contempla-

tion the will alone operates without the understanding. As to the mortifications proper to this state, they are as inexpressible as the prayer. Indeed mortification and prayer seem now to be the same thing, for the light in which the soul walks is so clear and wonderful, that the smallest imperfections are clearly perceived, and are by prayer alone mortified. Prayer is the whole business of her life, interrupted by sleep only, and not always then. True it is that by the necessities of nature, food, study, conversation, or business, it may be depressed a little from the height it attains when the soul sets herself to attend to God alone; still it continues efficaciously in the midst of all her pursuits. This is what mystic writers call the unitive way, because the soul is in a continual union in spirit with God, having transcended herself and all creatures, who are, as it were, annihilated, and God is all in all.

There is no spiritual state beyond this. But this state may indefinitely increase in degrees of purity, the operations of the soul growing more and more spiritual and divine without limit. In this state the soul is prepared for Divine inaction, passive unions and favours—all most admirable and efficacious for purifying her as perfectly as she is capable of in this life. God now provides for His beloved souls trials and desolations, incomprehensible to the inexperienced, leading them from light to darkness and from darkness to light again. In all these changes the soul preserves the same equality and tranquillity of mind, knowing that by them she approaches nearer and nearer to God, and plunging herself more and more profoundly into Him. The soul that has come thus far stands in no need of a guide or instructions; a Divine light is her guide in all things. It is not she that now lives, but Christ and His Holy Spirit that lives, reigns, and operates in her.

These are the three states of a spiritual contemplative life, distinguished according to the three states or degrees of

internal prayer. As for vocal prayer, it should not be esteemed a distinct degree of prayer. It may and does accompany all states of prayer without any substantial change, though with much variation in the manner of its exercise. While the soul is in the imperfect degree of meditation, she performs her vocal prayers with the aid of gross images and much distraction from God. But arrived at the exercises of the will, she recites them with less multiplicity and with a good measure of recollection; and on reaching the exercise of aspirations, her vocal prayers become also aspirative and unitive, not at all distracting her, but rather driving her more profoundly and intimately into God.

Ways in which God is represented.

God, Who is the principle and object of all our internal exercises, is in them represented to the mind in various ways. In meditation, the soul being still much immersed in sense is forced to make use of distinct gross images to apprehend Him, as the Humanity of our Lord and its mysteries; or the more obvious and conceivable attributes of the Divinity, such as His justice, mercy, or power. But in the practice of acts of the will, the understanding endeavours to apprehend God in the obscure notion of faith; and if sometimes the soul is forced to use particular sensible images, her mind after a short reflection on them returns to the recollected actuations of the will alone. And when the soul has arrived at the prayer of aspirations (or active contemplation), she uses no express images, but contents herself with the general obscure notion of God which faith teaches her.

It may be thought that perfect souls have no great advantage here over the imperfect; for all who are possessed of ordinary knowledge sufficiently believe that God, Who is infinite and incomprehensible, cannot be truly represented by images and notions of our own framing. But we should consider that there is a great difference

between acknowledging this truth in the speculative judgment and operating according to it with the will. For notwithstanding their judgment, when they apply themselves to prayer these imperfect souls are forced in practice to contradict their judgment and to represent God to their minds, not only by distinct, but even gross, sensible images, because they find that the true and perfect notion of God presented by the general, negative, obscure conception of faith will have little or no efficacy on their will. It will remain dry and devoid of all good affections, unless they exchange the general notion of faith for particular and express images. But perfect souls, having by long practice purified their internal operations, come at last to the state that they cannot, even if they would, derive benefit or warm their affections by sensible or particular images. Unless they silence not only the imagination but the understanding also, the will will remain without motion or vigour. Nay, in the case of the great desolation, the upliftings of the will are so pure, delicate, and imperceptible, that the soul can scarcely believe that she really operates towards God at all; so that she is often in great perplexity and fears that she has no real love for God.

How purity in prayer increases.

This gradual purification of images is so grounded on reason, and even nature, that everyone who has any experience in prayer will recognise its truth. This is well illustrated in the arts and sciences. For example, in music: when a person sets himself to learn it he is obliged at first to make use of many gross, distinct images, which he applies particularly and leisurely to every string, stop, and finger playing the instrument. But by practice having attained to some skill, far fewer images will serve to direct him, for by practice the images become purer and more spiritual, and consequently more universal, so that one will now effect what formerly required several. At length the person, becoming perfect in the art, will be able to play

on the instrument not only in the dark, but even while conversing with another, the images becoming so pure and universal that he does not perceive them, or know by what he is directed.

Now, if the operation of the soul may come to be so pure and subtle in natural sensible things, much more in spiritual and divine matters. The soul then should endeavour gradually to exclude and eliminate all sensible and intellectual images, that the will alone may become operative.

The degrees are sometimes mixed.

However, these three degrees into which prayer is divided are not so distinct that they may not sometimes be mingled. It may happen that the soul, as yet in the purgative way, may on occasion receive such an abundance of grace that during her meditation she is enabled many times to produce immediate acts of the will, and even aspirations, thus joining purgative, illuminative, and unitive exercises in one recollection. Nay, it is possible that a beginner may spend the whole of his recollection in these nobler exercises; but when this grace and devotion, which ordinarily last not long, cease, he will be obliged to return to the imperfect exercise of meditation. If out of aversion to descending he should adhere to the nobler exercises, which in this case are only temporary, he will lose all the fruit of his recollections through dryness and indevotion; indeed the exercise of prayer will become insupportable.

On the other hand, it may happen that the soul whose normal exercise is immediate acts of the will, may now and again find it necessary to help herself by meditation and to seek motives in the understanding to move her affections. These three states of prayer, then, must be distinguished in relation to the ordinary and constant exercise of the soul.

To prevent mistakes it would be as well to point out that some writers divide the exercises of meditation into three

The exercises of the active life similarly divided.

degrees—the purgative, illuminative, and unitive way—as may be seen in the books of De Ponte, Rodriguez, Louis of Granada, and others. This, however, has nothing to do with the use of the terms in these pages. The three degrees as used by these authors are concerned with the use of discursive prayer, and particular sensible images are never excluded; so that the perfection of this exercise is to discourse with greater simplicity and to draw thence more fervent affections and good purposes. Further than this active exercises cannot go, because the active life does not afford the leisure and freedom from external business which is necessary to enable souls to pursue contemplative exercises. These exercises begin with aspirations, and arise at the termination of imaginative exercises, and are indeed the perfection of the latter.

If active souls should proceed further they would abandon their state, which is principally concerned with exterior things; and these necessarily require the help and use of particular images, so that the general image or, rather, non-image of God used by contemplatives is not at all suitable to their spiritual course. They do not apply their external imaginative exercises with a view to contemplation, but to perform their external deeds of charity with greater perfection and purity of intention. As they do not practise contemplation, they do not—nor can they—teach it to others for want of experience.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST DEGREE OF PRAYER—MEDITATION

THE first and least perfect degree of internal prayer is meditation, or discursive prayer. It is not my purpose here to treat of it fully, but only in so far as it will be useful to souls aspiring to contemplation. The reader desirous of fuller information is referred to books treating expressly of the subject, of which there are many. Meditation, first degree of prayer.

Meditation is an internal prayer in which the devout soul takes in hand the consideration of some particular mystery of faith, that by serious and exact search into it with the imagination or understanding she may draw motives for good affections towards God. In these affections she continues as long as their efficacy lasts.

Meditation is a manner of prayer for which many are unsuited. To be apt for it is not a proof of ability, or sound judgment, or true devotion. Indeed, the more the soul abounds with devotion and good affections, the less is she capable of exercising meditation or of continuing long in it. And on the other hand, sometimes superficial minds, full of imagination, yet wanting in solidity of judgment and much indisposed to devotion, thrive much better on meditation than others of solid judgment and great abilities, who have at the same time good wills to seek our Lord. Who are unsuitable for it.

Women, generally speaking, are less well suited for meditation than men, and consequently do better at the

more perfect exercises of the will. In them the will seems to draw the stream from the understanding, so that they lack reasoning power and invention, but abound the more in will and affections. Great care, then, should be taken not to compel them without necessity to tarry long in discursive exercises; it will only prejudice their head and spirit, and delay their advance to the more beneficial exercise of the will in holy affections.

Souls generally begin with it.

As there is great variety in the internal dispositions of souls, it is impossible to give rules to fit all. This, however, may be said with certainty: that all souls that are not naturally incapable of raising affections by internal discourse should begin with meditation and continue in it till they are ripe for a higher exercise. To this they will attain sooner or later, according to their diligence in meditation, or their aptitude or inaptitude for the exercise, or the measure of grace that God shall bestow upon them.

This advice is of great importance; so that souls should not be allowed to apply themselves to the exercises of the will till they have spent a reasonable time in those of the understanding. For though, perhaps, while the *fervor novitius* lasts the soul may be full of affections and in little need of motives to stir them, yet when her fervour has evaporated she will find herself full of aridities, obscurities, and desolation, and with no refuge unless her understanding is well stored with motives produced by former meditations and considerations.

Those who are unapt for it.

The meditation here recommended, however, does not include those distracting, painful methods so often found in books, by which pageants and scenes are framed and meditated upon. Such a method of prayer may be proper for those whose profession is to lead active, distracted lives. By such exercises of the imagination they strive to obliterate the images contracted abroad and paint new holy images in their place. But for those who lead abstracted lives such

a method of meditation would be very painful, and the profit so little that it would not repay them. These, therefore, with moderate attention should think on the substance of the mystery proposed and the attendant circumstances, and thence draw as fervent and frequent affections as they can.

As for those who are naturally incapable (as many women are) of meditating, it is very requisite at the beginning that they should at least make good their loss by preparing for their recollections with serious and attentive reading of some pious book. But should the person be unable to read (for none are excluded), he must resolve with great courage to pursue the exercises of the will and affections, in spite of dryness or the absence of sensible devotion. He must not be daunted by aridities and distractions, which he can overcome only by pure obstinacy of the will, resolving neither to attend to distracting things nor care for them. Lastly, he must use more abstraction and solitude to prevent the multiplication of distracting images.

The will, being a blind faculty, is best able to lift itself up to God in darkness, without the use of images; and, being a spiritual faculty, it is exempt from the influence of the devil, who can act readily upon our corporal powers by suggesting distracting images. For these reasons it is desirable to make the discursive part of meditation as brief as may be; so that if the mere glance at the mystery suffices to produce a good affection, the further use of the imagination should be avoided.

The misery of improper method.

To conclude. When one considers the great variety of dispositions, and the great inconvenience of pursuing an unsuitable manner of prayer, one is filled with compassion for those poor souls who, imprisoned in a strictly enclosed religious life, naturally unfitted for discursive prayer, are, nevertheless, kept at these toilsome methods, to their great anguish and disquietude, without making any progress in spirit. This misery is peculiarly great in the case of

religious women, who, without the diversion of studies or variety of employments, cannot find food for the exercise of their imaginations. Dissatisfied with themselves, their defects continually growing, knowing nothing of the only remedy—internal exercises of the will—they are brought at length to a most deplorable and pitiable condition.

CHAPTER X

HOW TO EXERCISE MEDITATION

Meditation.

AND now, to set down more particularly how the soul aspiring to contemplation should make her meditation, I will first point out what should be avoided, and next what should be attended to.

What to avoid in meditation.

For enclosed religious and all others aspiring to contemplation, I should scarcely recommend any prescribed or fixed method of meditation, still less such precise methods as the following one, which is recommended by some modern authors: That the soul should place herself in the Divine presence. That she should make an act of contrition. That she should select the points of meditation. That she should consider them in a certain order, and frame representations of the persons, times, places, postures, and so forth. Thence she should draw motives for good affections. Next, that she should make suitable petitions. Then should follow good purposes. Afterwards, there should follow thanksgiving. Then she should form a list of the faults committed the day before, for which she should make acts of sorrow. Finally, she should examine how she made her meditation, so as to render an account to her spiritual director.

It is far from my purpose to speak against the use of such methods by those who invented them and still practise them. They may agree very well with their

institute, which is far more active than contemplative. But among contemplative souls such order is indeed disorder. Such detailed methods are more distracting and painful than the exercise itself. The expectation, too, that she is to render an account of her thoughts during meditation would be particularly distracting. It would occupy her thoughts more than the mystery. She would be more anxious to give satisfaction to her confessor than to perform her duty to God. Hence St. Teresa very justly complains of those directors who fetter and encumber their penitents' minds with minute rules which require more attention than the matter itself of prayer.

How to meditate profitably is quickly mastered by such as are fitted for it; but to observe such detailed methods is, for souls tending to contemplation, difficult and unprofitable; it is little better than misspending their time.

In meditation I would not bind the will not to go beside or beyond the understanding. On the contrary, my advice is that the will, provided it is carried towards God, should be allowed to go as far as it can. Indeed, liberty should be given to any good affection, whether it is pertinent to the subject of meditation or not, provided that it leads the soul to give herself more efficaciously to God than would be the case if she adhered to the motives under consideration. To say otherwise would be to esteem the act of meditation above the end for which it is ordained.

Moreover, when the soul has chosen a point or mystery to meditate upon, she should not strictly oblige herself to adhere to it, if another more palatable offers itself to her mind without being sought for. She may pursue the latter as long as the virtue of it shall last; then let her return to the former subject. The same liberty is to be recommended in the exercise of immediate acts.

However, should the new matter or affections excite any

passion, as fear (even of God Himself), tenderness, tears, scruples, or dejection, she should by no means entertain it. Such a course will only plunge her more deeply into her inferior nature and immortification, and will be far from purifying her inordinate affections. Even in the beginning of her spiritual course she should not be permitted to choose such matter for prayer; still less may she quit good matter for it. This advice applies equally to the matter of immediate acts of the will.

The freedom of spirit and permission to change the matter or affections during meditation here recommended, apply only when the change proceeds not from sloth, inconstancy, or fancy, but from a prudent election or interior invitation, presumably from the Spirit of God. In confirmation we may quote the words of St. Bernard: 'The measure and manner of loving God is to love Him immeasurably and freely, without a prescribed manner.'*

What must be observed.

And now, as to the manner in which I would advise the devout soul to make her meditation. Let her make choice of some good books on the subject, as Granada, or the abridgment of De Ponte's *Meditations*—the latter I would specially recommend.

She should begin with the matter for the purgative way, sin, death, the last judgment, hell, and so forth. Let her continue with these subjects till she finds she has an aversion from sin, and that much of her fear and remorse has passed away, so that she comes to have a good measure of confidence towards God. Then, without heeding whether she has finished all the exercises of the purgative way, let her pass to the exercises of meditation, which they call the illuminative way. These deal with some mystery of faith concerning our Lord's life or Passion, and are intended to increase humility, patience, and other virtues.

Let her continue in these exercises till she finds herself

* 'Modus diligendi Deum est diligere sine modo.'

disposed for resignation, love, and other affections of the unitive way. Then she may apply herself to the exercises of the unitive way.

It may happen that after the soul has entered upon the illuminative or unitive way (as used by writers on meditation), she may find herself compelled to return to the purgative way, in consequence of some serious fault or unusual temptation. In such cases she should submit and continue in the inferior exercises so long as there is need. This is not likely to be for any length of time.

When in the purgative way, should acts of resignation, or love, and, still more, should aspirations offer themselves, let the soul by all means correspond with them, so long as she finds a relish in them. When their efficacy is exhausted she can return to the consideration of motives and the exercises of the inferior acts.

The reason for the advice is this. The matter and manner of prayer should be arranged according to the temper and disposition of souls, and not according to the methods of books. Hence souls should apply themselves to the manner of prayer to which God calls them, and which is likely to subdue their inordinate affections. For this reason scrupulous and timid souls should be forbidden, even from the beginning, to use the fear-inspiring exercises of the purgative way. They should turn to exercises that will instil confidence in God, love, and similar dispositions.

A short time before her recollection let the soul read over the points of her meditation. She should think over points in the evening for her morning meditation, and after dinner for the evening meditation. This will enable her to employ the time of recollection better.

Let her not trust to her memory for the points, but have the book ready at hand in case of need ; and let her take the points in their order, or in the order she determined during her preparation.

In her meditation let her proceed thus: (1) With her memory and understanding let her think over the first point of her meditation. (2) Then let her draw from it a reason or motive to incline her in some way towards God. (3) Thereupon let her produce an act of the will—humiliation, adoration, resignation, contrition, and so forth. Let her continue the application of her soul to God as long as the will has life and relish for it, or as long as she can. (4) When this point has been exhausted, let her go on to the next, and so on till the end of the time appointed for her recollection.

The duration of the meditation should be an hour or little less. For the exercise of immediate acts a shorter time will suffice. The reason of the difference is that in the latter exercise the soul produces more acts of the will, in which all good consists, than in meditation. Moreover, the exercise of acts is generally dryer and more wearisome than meditation.

During meditation let the soul spend no more time inventing motives and in internal discourse than shall be necessary to move the will to good affections. This is important, otherwise the meditation will be rather a study and speculation than a spiritual exercise. When she has produced good affections, let her continue in them as long as she can, for in them consists all the profit of meditation. If on one consideration she can produce many acts of the will, so much the better; let her continue in each act as long as she is able. It matters not if the understanding lies dormant in the meantime.

Indeed, souls that have an effectual call to an interior life will waste little of the meditation in study or speculation. After a short, quick reflection on the matter, mystery, or motive, they will at once produce acts of the will. Even their consideration of the matter is not so much a reasoning, or inferring, as a simple recalling of the

subject from which the will may produce some act corresponding with the matter reflected upon. This kind of meditation is very suitable for those who have not the gift of internal discourse.

The soul practising meditation will find that she requires at first many points and many motives to produce affections. But in time the will will become better affected, so that fewer points will suffice to produce good affections and purposes, and take her through the recollection. When the soul has come thus far she will be ripe for the more sublime exercise of immediate acts of the will.

Blosius's method

Another way of meditating, recommended by Blosius, and used, it would seem, by him is this: To represent to the mind, without much discoursing, a mystery to which the soul has an affection, as our Lord's agony, or *Ecce Homo*, or His dereliction on the Cross. Then regard him in that state with as much tenderness and affection as may be, exercising short acts of love, compassion, gratitude, and so forth. Then, without much straining or force, the soul should endeavour to preserve this object present to her mind all the day, and perform her daily employments as in our Lord's presence. Thus the soul will come to her recollection well prepared with a tender heart, and will need little help from her understanding.

CHAPTER XI

RETREATS

Retreats.

BEFORE quitting the subject of meditation and speaking of the signs by which the soul may judge when she is ripe for a higher exercise of prayer, it will not be amiss to consider the effect of retreats on souls aspiring to contemplation. This consideration is all the more pressing as the custom of an annual retreat has been introduced into communities professing even the greatest solitude with the view to contemplation.

To whom retreats are profitable.

The question as to whether annual retreats are profitable or not can be rightly answered only by the due consideration of the condition of persons and the end or purpose of retreats. First, in regard of secular persons. A retreat is certainly an efficacious means for bringing a person who leads an imperfect, extroverted life to see the sinfulness of his soul, his perilous state, and the displeasure of God, and to lead him to a true compunction and purpose of amendment. It will also help a secular person leading an imperfect life to discover God's will about undertaking a more perfect way of life. Retreats made in silence and solitude do much to illuminate the understanding, purify the intention, and fortify the will in good purposes. A retreat may also instruct the soul how to serve God better in her present state of life. To this she is invited by the Holy See, which has granted many indulgences for her encouragement.

Next, with regard to religious, retreats are helpful at the beginning of a spiritual state by teaching with exactness the rudiments of mental prayer; they may also serve devout seculars who are desirous of undertaking a more spiritual course of life. They are also useful to persons in an active religious life. Such religious, by their many distracting employments and studies, inevitably contract many stains and defects. These are not easily perceived, and can scarcely be corrected by their daily meditations. For them, therefore, retreats are justly esteemed as requisite to procure light and grace to discover and rectify their defects and dissipation of spirit.

They are improper for contemplatives.

These, surely, are the natural and proper ends for which retreats are instituted. Now, in no respect can they be said to apply to persons living a life of religious solitude, pursuing and practising contemplation—except, perhaps, in this: a retreat may enable such religious to enjoy a more strict solitude and freedom from distracting employments, in order to attend to God alone in perfect liberty of spirit. In this respect religious persons in contemplative Orders, —especially such as are employed in offices, studies, and so forth—may have need of retreats to recollect their dissipated and distracted spirits. A retreat once a month, or as occasion shall require, will increase their light, and will enable them to lay up a store of principles and good purposes for their future conduct. Thus an habitual state of recollection may be attained, and provision made against dissipation during future employments.

Except under certain conditions.

But if contemplative souls make retreats of set meditations without any definite or express intention of advancing themselves in affective prayer, it is difficult to see what benefit they can reap from them. For they are supposed not to stand in need of instructions how to pray mentally; and meditation is but the first imperfect step in mental prayer. Still less do these souls need to make a total

change of life, or penitential satisfaction for former sins, or to excite remorse for them. Moreover, by the exercises of a retreat, as usually given, they will not learn how to practise their religious observances in solitude better, or how to make vocal prayer of obligation more perfectly. Nor will the exercises advance them in contemplation, for they end in themselves, and are not intended as means to advance souls to higher degrees of prayer. Besides, when persons, as is often the case with women, are naturally indisposed to internal discursive prayer, what are they to learn by retreats of set meditations?

All things considered, nothing, in my judgment, can be more unfitting than such retreats for contemplative souls. The due observance of choir will accomplish far more efficaciously all that these exercises claim to do. Indeed, great harm may be done to contemplation by them, for such exact observance of minute details, such captivity of spirit is required, that when all is over, souls are often quite incapable of resuming the prayer proper for them, or of complying with many of their regular duties. To these we may add the inconveniences which often follow strict examinations of conscience, or the repetition of general confessions—all very prejudical to tender souls.

To contemplatives obliged (perhaps by superiors devoted to the active way) to make retreats and pursue exercises unsuitable to their state, my advice is that they should keep themselves in as much stillness of mind as they can. And having received instructions for prayer, they should give free scope to their affections, not troubling whether the affections are suitable to the meditation proposed or not. Nor should they allow themselves to be distracted by reflections on their prayer in order to render an account of it to others. Lastly, let them endeavour to preserve due liberty of spirit in their examinations and confessions, proceeding no further than they find profitable, and above all

things avoiding all that is likely to nourish fear and scruples or to disturb their peace of mind.

Retreats for seculars.

As for seculars, retreats made at set times should be of immense benefit. And that the fruits of these retreats may not be quickly lost, they ought to take care to make good use of the lights received in them, and to put into execution their good resolutions. For they must not expect to acquire a habit of sanctity by a few days of silence and prayer, but only a transient desire and disposition for it; and if they do not cherish and increase these good desires, they will quickly pass away.

Moreover, as they will observe the evident good results of mental prayer, they should resolve to allow themselves a reasonable amount of time to pursue it when they return to their secular life. They should also use as much abstraction as their state of life will permit. Otherwise it is to be feared they will not only return to their former neglect and sins, but will add the guilt of ingratitude to God, who so powerfully called them from sin; their subsequent sins, too, will be committed against a clear light.

Certainly, if souls rashly rely on these retreats and meditations to make amends for all past faults and sins, they will be in great danger of deceiving themselves. It is undoubtedly good to seek means to procure contrition for past sins; but if the soul, relying upon having such a remedy in reserve, shall neglect care and watchfulness over herself, it is to be feared that what she takes for contrition will be no more than natural sorrow. It is not likely that God will shower down His grace on a soul whose intention is so corrupted.

CHAPTER XII

SIGNS WHEN A CHANGE OF PRAYER SHOULD BE MADE

Change from meditation to prayer of the will necessary.

It is impossible for the soul that leads an abstracted life and diligently pursues internal prayer to abide always in meditation or to rest in any degree of affective prayer. For it is the nature of such intellectual and spiritual operations to become ever more and more pure, abstracted, and universal, and to carry the will and affections of the soul higher and further into God. The activity of the imagination and understanding will continually decrease, and the activity of the will will increase and gain ground on the understanding, till at last all the operations of the latter become so quieted and silenced that they cease, or at least become imperceptible.

When the soul is thus invited and disposed to come nearer to God, she must correspond with the invitation. And if through her own or others' ignorance she is so fettered as to be deprived of due liberty of spirit to correspond with it, and fails to quit her interior exercises, she will find little or no profit in her prayer, but rather extreme pain, so that she will be scarcely able to persevere in her recollections.

In active state change not needed.

It is otherwise with those whose profession is to live in an active state of life, even though they seriously strive to attain to the perfection of their state. They may continue all their lives in meditation and follow its methods.

What they lose by distractions they may recover at the following meditation, the good images expelling the vain ones contracted in their external employments. Though their meditations will grow more and more pure and in the spirit, still, they will not exclude the direct use of the imagination.

Principal sign for change in prayer.

When the contemplative soul has practised meditation for a reasonable time, and perceives that its exercise has become dry and unpalatable to her spirit, causing disgust and little or no profit, she should abandon meditation, and betake herself to the exercise of immediate acts. These she will doubtlessly perform with great delight and facility to the great profit of her spirit.

Exercises of will and understanding compared.

It is a great mistake of some writers to think that the exercises of the will are mean and base as compared with inventive meditation and speculations about divine mysteries. None, they say, but fine, intellectual spirits can meditate well, whereas the most ignorant and simple may exercise acts or affections of the will. On the contrary, it is most certain that no acts of the understanding—as speculation, consideration, and so forth—have any power to give true perfection to the soul, except in so far as they excite the will to love God and to unite itself to Him. Moreover, by exercise this union may be obtained in perfection by souls that are incapable of discourse, and that have only that knowledge of God which is afforded by a belief in the fundamental truths of the Christian faith. From this it is evident that the end of all meditation is to produce acts of the will. Let no man, therefore, neglect or despise the exercise proper for him from a notion that it is too mean. Let him first try it, and not till then pass judgment.

Signs for change in prayer.

I will now endeavour to give some more exact instructions about passing from meditation to immediate acts of the will. I will indicate by what signs the devout soul may reasonably judge when she is ripe for the change. Still it

must not be forgotten that the soul must principally depend on her internal light, which God's Holy Spirit will afford her in and by prayer.

Let the devout soul diligently pursue her present exercise of prayer, advisedly undertaken, or recommended by a prudent director till the time for a change comes. Let her, says the excellent author of the *Ladder of Perfection*, content herself with the gift of God till He is pleased to bestow on her a better. This He will not fail to do when He sees it to be for her good. By acting thus she will increase in charity, though she may see no proofs of spiritual advancement. And when it shall please God to make a change in her prayer, He will by degrees so press her to it that in the end she will clearly perceive and correspond with His invitation. Till that time comes, it will be vain to examine or form an opinion of her progress. It is best to do her duty and leave the results to God.

The change, when it comes, consists in this: that the activity of the imagination and discourse decreases, and the whole internal exercise of prayer, little by little, is reduced to blind operations of the will. These operations or affections grow by practice more and more natural, quiet, pure, spiritual, imperceptible, and profound, the Divine Spirit drawing the soul in her exercises ever more and more into Itself.

Ordinarily when the time for a change to a more sublime exercise of prayer comes, it will not be perceived at once, or but very obscurely and doubtfully. The soul will notice only an improvement in her exercises, her operations becoming gradually more spiritual. Indeed, in some there is almost a daily increase in the purity of their prayer, an improvement which they themselves may see, though they may be unable to express it on account of its subtle character.

Far less serious inconveniences would follow from detaining the soul too long in an inferior degree (as meditation),

when she is fit for a higher one, than if, through levity or an ambition to imitate others or to follow unsuitable instructions, she were to attempt too soon a degree of prayer above her present capacity. In the former case a remedy is easily found by raising the soul to a more perfect and, in her case, more suitable exercise ; and meantime she is exercising humility and submission of judgment, by which she will receive much profit. But in the other case it is not so easy to find a remedy ; for there is the natural unwillingness and shame in the soul which makes it difficult for her to acknowledge a too hasty ambition. Besides, she will be disposed to justify herself by misapplying certain expressions in spiritual writers which forbid souls to abandon their exercises for an inferior one through discouragement from aridities or dissatisfaction. However, unless the soul submits to the mortification of returning to her inferior exercise of meditation, she will be in danger of incurring an habitual dryness, melancholy, and stupidity. Moreover, she will run into endless perplexities, to the great disquiet of her own mind and the annoyance of her director, who will be worried with innumerable questions and doubts.

Still, it cannot be denied that God often invites souls to a change in prayer through their reading. Then they should follow such instructions as a light sent from God. In this case it is really the secret motion and invitation of God to apply those instructions that is their guide ; without this impulse they should apply to themselves nothing that they read in books.

The signs in detail.

And now to speak more in detail. When the soul observes in herself the five following signs she may reasonably consider that she should betake herself to the prayer of the will :

1. First, she will find no longer the pleasure, satisfaction, and profit in her exercise that she did formerly. On the contrary, there will be a sensible disgust and a kind of

inability to practise internal discourse any longer. If she should force herself to meditate, it will produce no effect on her affections, which if left to themselves would flow far more freely. Moreover, this disgust does not arise from some indisposition, passion, or occasional aridity, but it is a lasting disgust, springing from the desire to please God and to grow in perfection, and from a feeling of uncertainty about her present state, whether it can bring her to her desired end.

2. Then the soul will perceive a certain impulse or inward invitation to enter upon a new exercise, not yet clearly known to her; or, if there is no new exercise suggested to her, there is at least an impulse to abandon her manner of prayer. This happens when from aspirations the soul is invited to rest and repose in God, with a cessation of all active aspirations or affections—the immediate disposition to supernatural contemplation.

3. The devout soul will here doubtlessly call to mind the benefit she has reaped from her manner of prayer. She has grown accustomed to it, and it is not easy to take up new ways. Besides, for want of trial and experience, she does not realize the value of the new exercise suggested. It will appear strange and uncouth, and it is difficult to believe that it will prove more profitable than her accustomed exercise. For such reasons she will be apprehensive and disinclined to venture upon the new way.

4. During this uncertainty and irresolution her distaste for her present exercise will rather increase than diminish, God still interiorly, though not palpably, inclining her to the new way. At length, almost forced, the soul ventures upon the new exercise; yet with some doubt at first whether the change will prove beneficial.

5. As soon as she has well entered upon her new exercise she will find it delightful—in fact, just what she needed, and withal far more profitable than her former

exercise. Henceforth with courage and joy she will persevere in it.

By such steps and degrees the soul that is purely under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit passes from one degree of prayer to another, till at last she comes to contemplation. Then she will see clearly that it was not herself but God that led her by the hand, drew her on into the new exercise, and taught her how to behave herself in the beginning. Afterwards she proceeds as if by her own habitual skill, though God really is in everything her secret master and helper. He deals with a humble soul as a writing-master with his scholar. He at first moves the scholar's hand to form and join the letters, but afterwards he guides him only with his eye and tongue; or as a father who carries his child over a ditch and stile, but lets him walk alone on the plain and even way.

As for the soul that by reading or by a director is instructed in the nature and degrees of internal prayer, her transition from a lower to a higher degree will be made much after the same manner, except that the degree to which she ascends will not seem so strange to her. The signs for the change will be the same as already given—disgust for her meditation, and a kind of inability to pursue it with spiritual profit. Thus it will come to pass that the meditating or discoursing part of her prayer will daily diminish, and the affective part increase and gain ground on the understanding, till at last the prayer becomes entirely of the will. So she passes almost unawares into the next degree, her prayer becoming gradually more and more purified. When the soul has duly entered the higher degree she should not for any dryness or obscurities quit it to return to meditation; she should use a discreet violence with the will to compel it to produce good affections and acts, although her inferior nature should take but little pleasure or satisfaction in the exercise. By so doing she will benefit herself, mortifying

her inferior nature and fixing divine love more profoundly in the spiritual portion of her soul.

To conclude. The spiritual life is subject to many wonderful changes, both external and internal; and all are according to the goodwill and pleasure of God, Who is not bound by rules and methods. Let us, then, be surprised at nothing, only following Him in all simplicity and resignation. Let us not tie ourselves too fast to any exercise, nor refuse any to which He may call us, seem it ever so strange and to the natural man, even senseless. In His guidance there can be no shadow of danger, but all is secure. And this should be a great comfort to the devout and resolute soul.

Wonderful changes in spiritual life.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SECOND DEGREE OF PRAYER: ACTS OF THE WILL AND AFFECTIONS

Forced immediate acts.

THE duly prepared soul that, by a Divine call, relinquishes meditation for the exercise of immediate acts or affections of the will, then only begins to enter upon the ways of contemplation, the sublimest exercises any soul can practise. All the difference that will follow hereafter regards only the greater or lesser promptitude, or the degree of purity with which the acts are produced.

The whole extent, then, of internal prayer of the will (and this is contemplative prayer) may be comprised under these two distinct exercises: (1) There is the exercise of forced acts or affections of the will, produced immediately without a distinct, express motive represented in the understanding, or else made in harmony with such a motive, yet without any formal discourse. They are called *forced* acts, because it is long before good affections will flow naturally from the soul, so that for some time she will need to use some force to produce these acts of the will, which constitute imperfect contemplation. (2) The exercise of aspirations, which, though in substance it differs but little from the former, yet because the acts are produced with facility, without force, forethought or election, flowing freely from an internal impulse of the Holy Spirit, they are called not

acts, but aspirations, the constant exercise of which is proper and perfect contemplation.

Of these two exercises I shall now speak, beginning with forced immediate acts, or affections of the will. Difference between acts and affections.

In this exercise a distinction is made between acts and affections. The former are made in and by the superior will only, without any concurrence of sensitive nature. Such are acts of humiliation, resignation, and so forth, which do not produce any sensible pleasure in our inferior nature. But affections, such as love, joy, hope, desire, and so forth, though exercised by the will, are in the case of imperfect souls much immersed in sense. The affections begin at first almost wholly in the inferior nature, but by practice they become more spiritual, till they reach, as it were, the top of the sensitive nature, where it unites with the superior spiritual will.

Now whether it be acts or affections that should be practised must depend upon the observation and experience which each soul has of her own natural disposition and inclination. Souls generally are more disposed to the exercise of immediate acts, which are more profitable and more secure. I shall, therefore, most insist on them in the following pages.

As for the exercise of sensible affections, it belongs only to souls that are naturally of a tender and affectionate disposition. This love expresses itself with much feeling and emotion, so that they are easily moved to tears or feel a warmth and pulsation about the heart. Such symptoms, however, do not argue a greater love than that of those who do not experience such effects. Love may be as cordial, and more firm, generous, and active in others who seldom or never feel such emotions. Sensible affections.

Such tender souls, having withal a natural propensity to seek God in their interior, can easily exercise their sensible affections towards God without troubling themselves with

seeking reasons and motives for it. Indeed in a short time they come to have a kind of disgust for inventing or considering motives represented by the understanding.

The principal care of such souls should be to raise the love out of their sensitive nature to the superior spiritual will, by whose operations alone the soul is truly perfected. Hence, as was noted about sensible devotion, they should mortify and restrain rather than give free scope to their tears and feelings in prayer. As for the rest, the instructions following for the exercise of immediate acts of the will will guide them. When any particulars which concern affections as distinct from acts of the will occur they will be noted.

Affections of the spirit.

Besides these sensible acts of love, there are other acts of love which are purely in the spirit. Of all the operations of the will, they are the most sublime that the soul can exercise in this life. They cannot be used by the soul, so as to be her constant and ordinary exercise, till she has come to perfect mortification, which ordinarily is not before a passive union. Then they are exercised in a manner so spiritual and divine that the inexperienced cannot conceive, nor the experienced express it. They consist of certain painful yet delightful longings after God; certain languishing upliftings of the spirit towards an unknown, dark, Divine Object, the absence of which causes a weariness of all sensible contentment—nay, even of spiritual pleasures. But of such operations we shall speak when we come to treat of perfect contemplation.

Acts compared with meditation.

And now as to the manner of exercising immediate acts of the will. The soul's aim should be to recollect herself by the general notion that faith gives her of God. But if unable to do this at once, she represents to herself some divine object, as some perfection of God, or a mystery of faith, as the Incarnation, Transfiguration, or Passion of our Lord. Then, without discourse as used in meditation, she immediately produces acts or affections towards God, or

upon herself in reference to God, adoring, giving thanks, humbling herself in His presence, resigning herself to His will, and so forth.

This exercise is easier to learn and understand than meditation; so many rules are not necessary for it; nor is there so much study or exercise of the understanding and imagination. Indeed, it is a very plain and simple exercise, consisting merely in the efficacy of the will. Notwithstanding its simplicity, it is a far nobler exercise than meditation, as the fruit is greater than the seed. The operations of the understanding can produce no good effect upon the soul except in so far as they influence the will, by disposing it to submit and resign itself to God, or to tend towards Him by acts of love, adoration, and so forth.

Though this exercise is not so laborious as meditation, yet it will seem to some souls more difficult, even after they have made some progress in it; but a resolute persistence by God's grace will overcome all difficulties.

Let me here repeat this advice, which must never be forgotten: that the devout soul called by God to walk in these internal ways of prayer must be courageous and diligent in the pursuit of them amid all desolations, obscurities, and distractions. Let her practise these exercises as much as possible in the superior will, not caring whether her sensitive nature concurs or not.

In forced immediate acts of the will, especially at first, there is some degree of meditation, which consists in thinking of the object and then internally producing the act or affection itself, and quietly continuing and resting in it till its virtue is spent. There is, besides, always some use of images; but these by practice grow more and more pure, and discourse ceases. In time the soul will begin to reject all distinct images and to apprehend God without any particular representation, only by that obscure notion which faith gives us of His totality and incomprehensibility.

This notion alone is truth; all distinct images are but imperfect shadows of truth.

How great is the security of the soul thus operating purely with the will! How free from those errors and dangers into which she may be led by the curiosity of the understanding! Here God Himself is her only light. Though images should intrude themselves into her imagination or be stirred up by the devil, the soul will not apply herself to them, but will turn from them or transcend and renounce them. Without images to stir up sensuality and enthral the rational will, the devil cannot inflict the least harm upon the soul, or hinder her union with God.

Acts of a simple character recommended.

The more plain and simple is the expression of the acts, the better is their effect upon the recollection. Such elegant expressions, for instance, as are to be found in many parts of St. Augustine's *Confessions* and *Soliloquies*, or in St. Bernard, or St. Teresa's *Exclamations*, though full of life and apt to inflame the affections when read out of prayer-time, yet are not very suitable during recollection, for the exquisiteness of the expression gives too much pleasure to the fancy, and thus distracts and weakens the actuations of the will. This holds generally true; but if the soul finds more profit from using them, let her in God's name do so.

The less impetuous are the operations of the will in immediate acts the better. When still, quiet, peaceable, and profound, provided there is no wilful negligence, they are particularly effectual and profitable, for they calm the passions and steady the imagination.

Dangerous to expect Divine communications.

Much harm may come to the soul that ceases to work internally and to tend to God, in the vain expectation that God will speak to her in an extraordinary manner or tell her some new thing. By giving way to such foolish presumption, she deservedly exposes herself to diabolical illusions; or she may vainly interpret her own imaginings to be internal communications from God. It will be very

perilous to give credit to such fancies. Such souls should consider that if God desires to communicate His will to them in any extraordinary manner, He will speak and act whether the soul wishes it or not; and whether she likes it or not, she must bear and suffer. Let her therefore abstain from indiscreet invitations to such divine converse; let her pursue her exercises quietly, not ceasing till God forces her to desist from them.

On rendering an account to directors.

The practice of rendering an account of internal prayer, demanded by some directors, is not to be recommended. It causes distractions and solicitous reflections upon the operations of the soul in order to remember them and repeat them afterwards. Moreover, in this exercise, which is plain and simple, and consists principally in operations of the will, it is extremely difficult to manifest its acts to another, as they leave scarcely any sensible impression on the memory. Lastly, they are exercised directly to God without any reflection; but it is by reflection that the soul notes and remembers her actuations.

Efficacy of acts of well-disposed souls.

Where there is a good propensity to introversion, an act produced by the will towards God is not only much more prompt, easy, and profound, but also far more efficacious than any act made without such a propensity, even though the person be ever so learned and skilled in reasoning. Nevertheless, souls of even the strongest propensity to internal ways may sometimes find themselves obliged to use meditation ;* but, unless misled by their director, they will not tarry long there, but will presently break forth into abundant good affections.

* St. Teresa seems to go even further. She writes: 'For my part, I believe that, however elevated our prayer may be, this (viz., some degree of meditation) is necessary till we die.'—*The Interior Castle* (Mans. vi., c. vii.).

CHAPTER XIV

HOW VARIOUS ACTS ARE TO BE EXERCISED

Concerning the appendix.

At the end of this work I have added a collection of acts of the will and holy affections as models, for the use of all whom God calls to an internal life of contemplation. There are no exercises for meditation given, as this book does not treat of it except in passing, as a preparation for affective prayer. Besides, there are plenty of meditations to be found elsewhere, which may be practised according to the instructions I have given. As for the supreme degree of affective contemplative prayer or perfect aspirations, I have contented myself with a few examples, rather to show imperfect souls their character than for the use of the perfect. These are led by a Divine light, and are in no need of human prescriptions; nor, indeed, can they profitably use affections other than those suggested to them by God's Holy Spirit.

A sufficient variety of exercises will be found for forced immediate acts of the will, suitable to all states and dispositions, as acts of fear, sorrow, and so forth, for the purgative way; acts of adoration, worship, humility, resignation, and love, for the illuminative and unitive ways. Distinct exercises will also be found for affections as distinguished from acts of the will. There are, moreover, abundant examples of simple acts of resignation, as being generally suitable to most souls. Lastly, several exercises

are of a mixed character, partly composed of acts, partly of affections, as many souls prefer a variety. My desire has been to suit all tempers of mind, or, at least, to put the soul in the way of framing suitable exercises for herself.

The soul that has spent sufficient time in the diligent practice of meditation and is naturally called and led by God to the exercise of immediate acts, ought to take at once for the subject of her recollections the acts which belong to the unitive way, as acts of divine love, resignation, and so forth. But where the soul is utterly unfit for meditation, the case is otherwise; she must necessarily begin her spiritual course with the prayer of immediate acts. Such a soul will find it best, ordinarily speaking, to take at the beginning for the matter of her acts subjects proper to the purgative way, as acts of contrition, fear of judgment, fear of hell, and so forth. This advice is given also by Blosius in the tenth and eleventh chapters of his *Institutions.*

In the exercise of immediate acts of the will the devout soul will do well, at least at first, to use them mentally, because less distracting, unless by experience she finds that, by using them vocally, they afford more relish to her spirit, and cause a more profound recollection.

Each exercise consists of about eight acts or affections; but let not the soul tie herself to that exact number in any recollection. If one exercise will not suffice, let her borrow from the next; if one exercise be too long, let her use a portion only, and continue the next day where she left off.

The devout soul will find, as she makes progress, that the number of acts or affections required for each recollection will diminish, so that, though at the beginning eight scarcely sufficed, perhaps, for one recollection, yet afterwards five, two, or even one, will often be sufficient.

The soul would do well to take the exercises and acts proper to her in their order, otherwise she will spend the

precious time allotted to prayer in looking hither and thither for something that will take her fancy, and in the end, perhaps, find nothing to her liking, or nothing to countervail the distraction and loss of time incurred. It is also a bad custom of some to open the book at random, and to take the acts or affections that they first happen to light upon.

Still, let not the soul so tie herself to her set acts as to refuse to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit, should any other kind of affections or acts of a more palatable nature offer themselves, as of resignation, love, or aspirations. Let her entertain them and abide in them as long as their savour lasts, and then let her return to her former exercise.

However, when the soul suffers from fears or scruples, causing unquietness, dejection, and want of confidence in God, let her not bind herself strictly to the prescribed exercises. She should prudently omit all acts that are likely to raise or feed such passions, and apply herself instead to exercises of hope, love, and joy in God.

Indeed, souls of this disposition ought not even at the beginning to dwell long upon exercises that encourage sorrow for sin and fear, as death, judgment, and hell, but rather let them turn their affections in a contrary direction. Should they fall into new faults, let their sorrow be exercised in general, or virtually by acts of conversion to God, rather than directly and expressly. And let them not be scrupulous, fearing that God at such times expects a sensible remorse or earnest expressions of hatred of sin. Such detestation is sufficiently involved in an act of direct love of God, which contains much perfection besides. As these acts are more beneficial to her, so are they more acceptable to God.

The soul having fixed on an act or affection contained in her exercise, let her dwell on it as long as she draws profit from it, and then let her pass on to another. If in a clause there is contained matter for several desires or affections,

let her separate them mentally and rest on each ; in this way the exercise will last longer and yield more profit.

When the soul has finished all the exercises suitable to her state, let her begin them over again, unless she finds herself drawn by God to a more perfect exercise, as that of aspirations. Indeed, whenever she finds herself moved to perfect aspirations, upliftings of the will, or acts of resignation, upon occasion of some cross, let her not fail to correspond with the invitation.

They who find no profit or relish in such exercises may conclude that they are not yet ripe for them. They should continue in discursive prayer till it loses its savour and they find pleasure in affections.

Acts addressed to Divinity recommended.

The acts and affections contained in the exercises are mostly directed to God Himself or the Divinity, as if they were an internal converse with God. This is perfect introversion, and there is no assumed exercise from which the soul can derive greater profit.

Such actuations, however, are often painful, for the introversion is exercised without the help of gross, sensible images, which seem to afford some relief to the mind. When such images present themselves, the soul tending to the naked Divinity dwells not on them, but transcends or rejects them. It may happen occasionally, however, that the soul finds no satisfaction in an object so perfectly spiritual, and, according to some writers, she must not at such times refresh her mind by turning to another good, though inferior, object. But such violent self-contradiction cannot be without much pain, so that souls may become weary of introversion, and find great difficulty in seeking the Divine presence in a manner so much above their nature. It would also cause them to lose comfort and profit in their exercises.

In such cases, then, the soul should be recommended to refresh her mind by quitting for a time her painful intro-

version and addresses to the pure Divinity, and pursue an exercise less painful because less introverting, as acts or affections to the Humanity of our Lord,* to Angels, Saints,

* Father Baker appears to allow the soul to turn to the Sacred Humanity of our Lord only as a refreshment when weary of seeking and addressing the pure Divinity. But it may be noted that many mystic writers hold that meditation, at least occasionally, on the mysteries and especially the Passion of our Lord, is indispensable, even in the highest states of prayer. For instance, St. Teresa (*Interior Castle*, Mans. vi., c. vii.) writes: 'You may imagine that one who enjoys such high favours need not meditate on the mysteries of the most Sacred Humanity of Christ our Lord. . . . And though I have met with opposition, and have been told that I did not understand the subject, because there are many ways by which our Lord conducts souls; and that after the "beginnings" have been passed it is best to exercise one's self in matters relating to the Divinity, and to avoid corporeal subjects, yet they cannot make me acknowledge that this is a safe way.' Hence the Saint holds that we should not 'intentionally separate ourselves from our only good and our only remedy, viz.—the most Sacred Humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ.' And for this reason: 'Our Lord says, "I am the Way and the Light," and that none can come to the Father except by Him, and that whoever seeth Him seeth also His Father.' The Saint also points out some of her objections against the opposite view. She 'assures' her opponents that they 'will not enter the two last mansions (the highest degrees of prayer), for if they lose the Guide—viz., our good Jesus—they will not find the right way there.' Moreover, by this way 'the devil may be able to make us lose all our devotion to the most Blessed Sacrament. The delusion in which I once seemed to have been entangled did not proceed so far as this, but only I did not feel any pleasure in meditating so much on our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . I clearly saw, however, that I was going wrong . . . and I never give over lamenting that there ever was a time wherein I did not understand that it is hard to gain with such great loss; and though I could easily, yet I would not, desire any good unless it were obtained by means of Him from Whom all good things descend.' We may point out that by meditation the Saint does not mean a formal discursive meditation, but merely to represent in the understanding some mystery, as the Agony in the Garden, and then, 'with a simple view,' to consider 'Who He is, and how ungrateful we have been for such great sufferings; then the will immediately comes in, though not with (sensible) tenderness, to desire

and so forth. Sometimes she may profitably address her own soul in internal speech, or some person absent, yet always in reference to God, or it will not be an act of religion, nor profitable.

In truth, for attaining to contemplation it is not absolutely necessary that the acts should be directed immediately to the pure Divinity. Still, it cannot be denied that such are the most excellent and most efficacious, because most introverting. Hence the soul should abandon her addresses to the Humanity of our Lord, or to the Angels or Saints, whenever she is interiorly moved or able to make acts immediately to God Himself, Who is the end and ultimate object of all internal communings and actuations.

A variety of acts given in Appendix.

To meet all dispositions, I have mingled in the exercises acts addressed to our Lord's most Sacred Humanity, to our Lady, etc., and sometimes soliloquies addressed to the soul herself. Such acts and affections abound in the Psalms and other parts of Scripture. Thus David addresses his soul: '*O my soul, wilt thou not be subject and resigned to God?*' Or again: '*O my soul, why art thou sad, and why dost thou so disquiet thyself in me? Hope still in God,*' etc. Again, he sometimes addresses absent persons: '*Come hither, and I will tell you what great things God has done for my soul.*' Sometimes in Scripture the soul imagines she hears God speaking to her: '*O my chosen beloved soul, come, and I will place my throne in thee.*' St. Augustine's *Soliloquies* and Thomas à Kempis are full of similar acts. By such changes the soul is refreshed, and is enabled to produce good affections towards God.

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to serve Him in something for such wonderful kindness, and to suffer something likewise for one who has endured so much for us, with other such-like desires. . . . If the soul do not this, it is proper she should endeavour to do it, because I know that even very sublime prayer will not prevent her; and I consider it is not good unless we are often exercised in this kind of meditation.'

As the form of the act is not of absolute necessity, so neither is the matter of it. Whether it be an act of contrition, humility, adoration, resignation, or congratulation or veneration of the Saints, or an appeal for their intercession, matters not, provided the acts ultimately terminate in God. It is perseverance in any exercises of religious acts that is the principal, if not the only, means of attaining to contemplation.

In truth, whatever kind of acts or devotions the soul uses, if they are constantly practised they will all end in God. Thus, for instance, if a person be so ignorant as to know no devotion but the Rosary, and can begin a recollection only by turning his thoughts to the Blessed Virgin, whose protection he implores; yet on becoming profoundly introverted by this means he quickly leaves direct thought of her and is led, perhaps unawares, to the unknown obscure object of the Divinity, into which he plunges and loses himself. Indeed, perfect introversion is inconsistent with direct express acts made to any creature.

The general principle, then, in this matter is that the soul should be guided by experience and observation, and should use the kind of acts or affections which she finds most profitable, preferring the savour and benefit she derives from them to any rules, methods, or authority.

Some benefit by no change.

There are some souls to whom one only exercise, without any variety, may suffice for their whole life, till they arrive at perfect contemplation. Their advancement will consist in the degrees of purity and recollection with which they perform their exercise. They are souls that have a natural aptitude for acts of the will and not for meditation. In meditation change of matter is necessary, for the same unvaried motive will soon lose its power to move the affections, and the soul will experience a feeling of satiety and aversion from an affection upon which she has fed for some time. Souls also that have a strong and urgent call

from God to seek Him in internal ways, combined with a natural aptitude for an internal life, may find one kind of exercise will suffice till they come to perfection. Natural aptitude consists in stability of the imagination and calmness of the passions.

Such souls will find it best to confine themselves to one exercise. Blosius, in his *Institutions* has drawn up one of this kind, which, he asserts, if it be diligently prosecuted together with mortification, will bring the soul to perfection and mystic union. Blosius seems to have practised it himself. I have included an exercise after Blosius's model.

One great benefit which such souls will reap is this: they will have no need to seek for an exercise, nor will they stand in need of books, for after a little practice they will have it by heart. Care, however, must be had to fit the exercise to the soul. The exercise must be sufficiently comprehensive to include acts suitable to the various states of the soul. It should contain acts of contrition, and the exercise of the principal virtues, especially of resignation. The soul should abide in her exercise till she is prepared and called by God to pure aspirations. Then all prescribed exercises must cease, for the soul then prays not by her own election, but by an internal impulse of the Divine Spirit.

The 'Our Father.'

Some writers recommend our Lord's Prayer for the exercise in daily recollections. Each petition should be treated as a separate act, and dwelt upon as long as the soul finds a relish in it. By so doing she will omit nothing for which she ought to pray. This advice finds support in the words of an ancient hermit, as recorded by Cassian: 'This prayer of our Lord seems to contain the fulness of all perfection, being begun or established by our Lord's own authority. Moreover it promotes those who are well exercised in it to that sublime state of prayer we mentioned before. It leads them to that inflamed prayer, that far

more eminent operation of the soul, which is known or experienced by very few. Nay, to speak more correctly, it is altogether inexpressible; it transcends all human knowledge, and cannot be uttered by any sound of speech. It is a degree of sublime prayer, which the spirit, illuminated by an infusion of heavenly light, cannot express in human language; but with all the senses and faculties united, it plentifully gushes forth from the heart, as water from a copious fountain, and ineffably pours itself out unto our Lord. In that one short moment it sends forth so many and great desires, that the soul herself, reflecting on her operations, is unable to declare or even conceive them.'

One exercise usually insufficient.

But it is not often that souls are so composed in their imagination and resolute of will as to be content with one exercise. For this reason I have gathered from various books a sufficient variety of exercises to satisfy all needs. But I do not desire souls practising internal affective prayer to bind themselves to these particular exercises, or to the order followed in them. They may arrange exercises for their own use, selecting here and there out of any books such acts or affections as they think will agree with their spirit. But when they have made their selection, I should seriously advise them to follow the directions for their use as given in these pages.

Preparation of reading.

The reading of a pious book, common in communities, before the recollection is a profitable practice, especially for souls exercising meditation. They should attend to the reading, that they may make it the matter of their prayer. However, it is better to prepare the matter of the meditation beforehand, because merely reading over the points once will be scarcely sufficient to imprint them upon the memory.

For souls practising immediate acts of the will, they might well employ the time in expelling distracting images; in placing themselves in the Divine presence; in begging God's

assistance; and in directing the recollection to His glory. If they preface their private recollections with reading, I should recommend St. Augustine's *Confessions*, *Soliloquies*, or the *Imitation of Christ*, or some other devoutly-written book: above all, passages containing the very words of our Lord will be a most valuable preparation; but no universal rule can be prescribed. Each one must choose the book and matter he finds most suitable.

When the preparation by reading is over, let the soul glance at the matter of the act or affection to be exercised in prayer; then, withdrawing her eyes from the book, let her form a suitable image or conception of it. When this is done, let her forthwith produce an act or affection to God corresponding with the matter, resting in it as long as its virtue lasts, and so proceed with the following acts in like manner.

Images useless for some.

Some souls find themselves unable to form an image that may become a matter of prayer for them. They are not fit for the exercise of immediate acts of the will, and much less for meditation. They should, therefore, apply themselves to the exercise of pious desires and devout affections. But these souls are rare.

It may happen at times to devout souls that they can neither produce acts nor affections. In such a case they should use a discreet violence with themselves and exercise the acts that seem least repugnant, for where force is applied acts exercised by the superior will should be used rather than affections. But if after trial this is found to be too great a strain, rather than waste the time, let them try a more imperfect exercise; let them speak to God in the third person, as if He were absent and would not hear them; or address the Angels, Saints or their own soul. If they cannot do this mentally—that is, with attention or pleasure—let them at least do it vocally, at the same time exercising as much patience and stillness as they can. By so doing,

they will afford a good, wholesome, profitable, though perhaps tasteless, repast to their soul.

If after trying all these ways they should still find this exercise insupportable—and this would be very strange—they may account it a case of extraordinary desolation. They must then prepare themselves for pure suffering and the exercise of patience and resignation. If they do this, the afflicting desolation will prove more profitable than a state and prayer of light and consolation ; though the profit may be scarcely perceptible, for the Spirit of God at such time works secretly in the depths of the spirit, but none the less efficaciously, for the soul's advancement.

At such times I should scarcely allow the soul to ease her mind by reading during her recollection. But if she find a book indispensable, and if after a little glance at it an affection be raised, let her quit the reading and follow the affection ; for reading at such times can be allowed only as a necessity, and should not be pursued further than necessity shall require.

When change of acts should be made.

No precise rules can be given to determine how long souls are to continue in acts of the purgative way before they pass on to acts of resignation and love, which belong to the unitive way. It may be said generally that the longer and deeper souls have plunged into vicious habits, the longer will it be before they are ripe for a change : yet the time will be lessened by fervour in prayer and mortification. For some a few months in acts of contrition will suffice ; for others, as many days ; some are so well affected towards God and innocent of vice, that they may be put at once into acts of resignation and love. But each should regard the state of his own soul and conscience, observing whether it is quiet and fairly at peace ; in that case, he may reasonably decide to abandon the acts of the purgative way.

But before passing from acts of resignation and love to the exercise of aspirations, a much longer time will be

requisite, even for souls the most innocent. This sublime exercise arises from a settled habit of charity established in the soul through long and constant practice of forced acts of the will. It does not depend on man's choice to determine when he will exercise aspirations; God alone inspires and directs them. Indeed, however industrious the soul may be in the use of prayer, she seldom arrives at the prayer of aspirations in youth before the warmth and activity of her nature has cooled and quieted down.

Notwithstanding, the soul should exercise aspirations whenever they offer themselves, even though she be in the lowest exercise of prayer, and as long as they continue all other exercises should cease.

Necessity of freedom.

To conclude. It should be understood that the exercises here given should be used only when necessary, as they commonly are with beginners and even with those who have made good progress in prayer. But interior souls that find sufficient matter at hand for resignation, love, and so forth, suggested by occurring difficulties, or coming spontaneously to mind, should not make use of these exercises. The same advice will apply also to imperfect souls, who may be much helped by God in the matter of their prayer. However, they should have the book at hand in case they should be in need of matter for prayer, for they must not rely on their first sensible fervour. When that ceases, as doubtlessly it will, they must not scorn to use a book, and even to apply themselves to inferior exercises and helps suitable to their imperfect state.

CHAPTER XV

ACTS OF RESIGNATION

Division of affective prayer.

ALL internal affective prayer consists either of such affections as stir the emotions in our sensitive nature, or of acts of the will produced by, and confined to, the superior soul. Now, as among holy affections the chief is love, so among all immediate acts of the will the most useful and important are acts of resignation and submission to the Divine will.

In the Second Book, the nature and qualities of divine love were sufficiently noted, so there will be no need now to give instructions how to exercise charity and love immediately to God in internal prayer. But the exercise of resignation requires fuller treatment, and is to be specially recommended as being generally the most secure and profitable of all exercises.

Acts of resignation.

Though acts of pure melting love for God—acts in which the images of creatures and all direct representation of God are excluded—are in themselves more perfect and unitive than are acts of resignation, which involve necessarily the images of external things, viz., the particular difficulties in which the soul intends to resign herself—yet to make amends for this disadvantage, acts of resignation are far more secure, and there is less danger of self-love and self-interest intruding themselves. For acts of immediate love are apt to stir pleasing emotions in our sensitive nature, and very few souls can preserve detachment from the

pleasure, unless they are exalted to a supreme degree of divine charity. Moreover, in resignation there is exercised true mortification and contradiction of self-love and self-interest more directly than in any other kind of internal prayer; consequently, it is a more purifying prayer than any other. And when we bear in mind the daily and almost hourly occasions we have of exercising it in innumerable difficulties, it is apparent that of all practices it is the most profitable. And though acts of resignation (which are, after all, the immediate fruits of divine love) involve in themselves images of external things, yet this is only in the beginning of the act; so that the soul does not dwell on such images, but quickly passes from them, and out of them into God.

Good Lord, what millions of questions, disputes, and perils, does entire resignation cut off! Not only all questions about worldly possessions in the secular state, but also questions about external matters in the religious life, as one's relations with Superiors or one's fellow-religious or with seculars; or, again, questions about matters of doubt or difficulties arising between God and timid or scrupulous souls—all these are cut off and swept away by entire resignation, which ever tends to simplicity, peace, and the possession of that one thing which our Saviour declares to be alone necessary, viz., the Divine Will, which is God Himself. It rejects all things that may hinder or delay the soul from attaining to the one only necessary good.

Hence it follows that the soul which is resigned in external and internal matters is not only free of dangers that may come from temptations or contradictions, but even of all doubts and uncertainty; whereas the unresigned soul is in a state in which nothing can satisfy her or give security to her conscience.

The soul that is exercising the prayer of resignation ought not to desist, notwithstanding any failings or broken resolu-

tions proceeding from frailty or sudden passion, for then the fault is often more in the inferior nature than in the superior will, and so is less blameworthy. But notwithstanding such failures, acts of resignation heartily made will not prove in vain, but in time will produce good results.

In view of the great excellence of the duty of resignation, I have added several exercises of acts of that virtue, suitable for all kinds of difficulties, external and internal, relating to outward goods or friends; to accidents that may befall the body, as sickness, pain, want of conveniences, or necessaries; or to difficulties that concern the soul, as aridities and temptations.

When the exercise of resignation in prayer comes to be the ordinary daily exercise of the soul, then she is established in the unitive way, properly so called; and well-minded quiet souls will soon be ready for the practice, both externally and internally, of this heavenly virtue.

Objects of resignation.

The objects of resignation are generally matters of difficulty, or that are contrary to our inclination. They are: (1) such difficulties as are sure to happen; (2) or are only probable, of which there are likely to be several degrees; (3) or very unlikely, yet possible; (4) or, lastly, altogether impossible. In all these resignation may profitably be exercised; but the more likely that the things will happen, the better. The best and most necessary resignation of all is in things that are sure to befall us, and which belong to our state, especially such as we find most difficult and contrary to our nature.

Further instructions.

Now as these latter occur most frequently to our minds in our recollections, we must be careful and resolute to overcome them by forming internal acts of submission of our judgment and will to God in their regard, so that we may be prepared when they actually arise. If when the difficulties actually occur, we truly and really accept and

embrace them with our superior will, however repugnant they may be to our sensitive nature, we shall more advance our soul in divine love and increase the habit of resignation, than we should be able to do by many mere internal acts, in which the soul represents a difficulty in the imagination only.

In performing these acts internally, the soul must be very careful to exercise them with profound humility, with a distrust of her own ability to resist any temptation or contradiction, with entire trust and dependence on God's grace, and with a firm faith in Him that He will assist her whenever He shall bring such trials upon her.

For this reason the acts of resignation are frequently expressed as an oblation of the soul, by which she places herself in God's hands to be entirely disposed of by Him; or of petition, in which she begs that in all occurrences God's will, and not her own, may be perfectly accomplished. When we make acts by way of resolution or purpose, though they seem to argue some confidence in our own strength, yet the devout soul should in her mind exclude all such confidence.

The most perfect way of producing acts of resignation—as, indeed, all other acts—is by intending purely the love of God, seeking His glory, and renouncing all inferior, unworthy interests of our own. Hence St. Alphonsus, in his excellent chapter on 'Prayer' in his *Method of Serving God*, exhorts all devout souls to exercise prayer, virtually or expressly with this intention. In the exercise of aspirations an express and direct intention of God's glory will scarcely be possible, because that sublime exercise does not admit of any reflex act, but implicitly and virtually they contain as much or more.

There is no need for the soul to follow in her recollections the order of the acts of resignation as given in the exercises. She may alter them according to her needs, or as they

shall be interiorly suggested to her by God or her own thoughts.

When beginning to use this degree of prayer, it will be best for the soul to single out such acts of resignation as regard daily recurring difficulties to which she has less aversion; and from these let her ascend by degrees to matters of greater difficulty, till at last, by God's grace, she is able to accept those things which are most opposed to her natural inclination. For if she should at once attempt acts of resignation above her strength, she would be in danger of dejection on finding that she wanted courage to submit to difficulties represented to her mind.

Indeed God Himself, in His wise and blessed providence, deals with us according to this method, proportioning our trials and afflictions to our strength and to the measure of grace which He gives us, sending to imperfect souls ordinary temptations only, as St. Paul says (1 Cor. x. 13), and reserving the greater combats for heroic souls that are more advanced in the ways of perfection.

When occasions for actual and real resignation do not arise, the soul may make general and indefinite acts of resignation, embracing all contradictions without exception, according to the form adopted by St. Ignatius: 'My God and my All, behold, I offer myself wholly to Thee, and submit all my affairs to Thy will.' Or in the words of our Lord: '*Not My will, but Thine, O Lord, be done on earth as it is in heaven* (Amen, Jesus),' or any similar form. This practice of universal resignation may be begun early and continued all through life, although only perfect souls can exercise such acts purely and without reservation. Indeed, when the devout soul has occasion to resign herself in any difficulty she may use a general formula, applying it to her particular difficulty without expressly naming it.

In exercising internally these acts, the soul should not

produce them too fast one on the other, but quietly and leisurely, with reasonable pauses.

Though in the exercises on the prayer of resignation mention is made only of matters difficult or displeasing to our nature, yet the soul may derive benefit from a contrary exercise. For example, as she may resign herself to sickness, pain, want, or humiliation, so she may resign herself to health, pleasures, riches, or honours, intending, if such be God's will, to accept these, and employ them only for His glory, and not to satisfy her corrupt nature. She will thus increase humility and divine love by them rather than diminish these virtues. However pleasing to our natural inclination the things may be in themselves, yet resignation regards that which is mortifying to us. Thus, he who for the glory and love of God accepts unwillingly an office attended with dignity and authority intends not to gratify ambition, but to curb and mortify the satisfaction he may feel, and to employ his office to the glory of God and the benefit of souls. Thus it is the nature of the spiritual life to turn to good account both prosperity and adversity, in all things to renounce self-seeking, and to look only to God. However, when we consider our frailty, and how easily we are corrupted by prosperity, resignation in such matters is proper for few souls. Adversity is far more secure and profitable for us.

To conclude. There are some souls that will find it best, perhaps, to continue in acts of resignation, and even in the same acts, till they arrive at the prayer of aspirations. Others, again, will benefit by great variety of acts and affections drawn from books or their own interior life. Some also will produce the acts after a short reflection on some motive, or even after a brief meditation. All these ways are good if the soul, by experience and observation, finds profit in them, for by that alone should all our exercises be regulated.

Aspirations.

But acts or forced affections, however perfect, must always give place to aspirations whenever the soul is invited or able to produce them. As acts are the end of meditation, so are aspirations the end and fruit of acts. They far more perfectly effect and procure the purity of soul and heavenly-mindedness to which we aspire by all our exercises.

CHAPTER XVI

PRAYER AND DISTRACTING EMPLOYMENTS

Prayer under external difficulties.

BEFORE passing on to the supreme degree of internal prayer, viz., aspirations, it is requisite to consider how the soul pursuing a contemplative life is to act when she finds herself deprived of much of her solitude, repose, and leisure to attend to God and His holy inspirations. This may happen (1) by being distracted with unavoidable external employments and offices for the good of the community or of souls; (2) or by being encumbered with the solicitude of sickness or infirmity. I will speak of the former difficulty here; the latter will be reserved to the following chapter.

Distracting offices.

That the devout soul may behave herself with purity in external offices and employments, she should bear in mind that it is unlawful, contrary to humility, and a sign of weariness in internal ways, to desire to rule over others. To desire or seek employments, dignities, or prelature, is wilfully to expose oneself to dangerous distractions and temptations. However, as it is necessary that some should be employed in offices for the common good, spiritual or temporal, it is unlawful utterly to refuse them when God or Superiors call upon the soul to undertake such offices.

Indeed, so opposed to the spirit of contemplative prayer are the distractions and solicitudes which attend offices, that religious in time of leisure, when their minds are more illuminated, ought to prepare themselves and imprint in their

hearts good resolutions never to expose themselves voluntarily to such dangers. And when these employments are imposed upon them, let them resolve to act vigilantly and prudently, in accordance with their former light, lest entering upon them unprovided they should prove mischievous and destructive of all devotion. Moreover, Superiors should consider that their principal care should be for the good of souls. It concerns them, therefore, to be very careful about exposing their subjects to such perils before the spirit of devotion and charity is firmly rooted in their hearts. They also will be accountable to God for the harm their subjects' souls incur by their appointments.

Some Superiors, being of an active spirit, and not knowing or not much esteeming internal ways, or thinking that the subject is more drawn to external than internal things, may unwarily heap on him employments which will greatly hinder his recollections. In such a case the subject should acquaint his Superior with the disposition of his soul. He should declare how much good he derives from the constant exercise of prayer, and what loss his imperfect soul incurs for want of it. Should, however, the Superior remain obdurate, he must submit.

How they should be discharged.

The interior soul, when she enters upon her office, should seriously consider that, as she is passing from a state of abstraction and solitude to one of business, she will henceforth enjoy less light than formerly, and that she will be exposed to great perils through unavoidable occasions of distraction, of impatience, or of gratifying her sensual nature, of which she had little experience in time past. She must therefore resolve to keep a more watchful guard over herself, lest business should cause her to forget herself and her former instructions and good resolutions.

To guard herself against such perils, she must be careful in attending to business not to fix her mind more intently and affectionately upon it than need be. Let her

often call to mind her former resolutions, and review again and again these or similar instructions; for without such care her spirit will decay, and she will grow negligent and tepid in her spiritual exercises. For our corrupt nature is very quick to lay hold of any excuse for quitting internal recollections—the mainstay of the spiritual life—especially now that prayer has become more irksome through dissipation of mind and frequent falls into immortification. Indeed, she will be apt to think that the nature of her employment is such as to be inconsistent with the obligations of an internal life. Then she will take advantage of any excuse to dispense herself from them, applying to herself the saying that every good work is a prayer.

Moreover, the soul must be careful, as far as the office will permit, not only to maintain her former mortifications, especially of the tongue and senses, but to avail herself of the many new ones which the discharge of her employment will afford her. And as she probably cannot enjoy that repose of spirit requisite for serious and perfect recollection, she should try to make amends by a faithful practice of mortification and patience. In this way she will advance herself in spirit.

Besides, the soul must remember that the duty of abstraction, most necessary in an internal life, has place even in distracting offices. She must, at least, not meddle in things which belong not to her present employment. As for things that belong to it, she must be careful to do them well and faithfully, yet without bestowing on them more solicitude than they positively need; performing them seriously, yet with composure and tranquillity of mind; not suffering them to distract or encumber her memory beforehand. And when executing them, let her abstain from passion and impetuosity, and from engaging her affections in them. The devout soul constantly discharging her office thus will attain to such liberty, ease, and steadiness of

spirit, that necessary employments will produce no harmful distractions, which, in truth, are principally caused by an inordinate affection for creatures.

Lastly, the principal care of the soul must be about prayer. Although on account of business she cannot continue so habitually in a recollected state, yet she must resolve to pursue diligently and faithfully her appointed exercises; for prayer is the principal instrument by which she obtains Divine light and grace to resist temptations. So that if prayer be faithfully performed, though it be with distractions, it will impel her to use fitting mortifications out of prayer-time, and to turn the burdens of her office, and even distractions, to the advancement of her spirit. But if she be careless in prayer, she will be careless in mortification, and little by little will lose all she had acquired with so much pains and labour; indeed, she will be in danger of never recovering her former state.

Offices may not dispense from prayer.

If any employment can excuse a soul for the neglect of prayer, it must surely be the Papacy, the highest and most burdensome office that anyone can undertake. Yet St. Bernard, in his excellent books of Consideration written to Pope Eugenius III., seriously advises him to borrow or steal daily from the affairs of the Universal Church some hours to employ in the holy exercise of prayer.

Nor will Louis of Granada allow us under the pretext of business to be excused from pursuing daily recollections. For, says he, no business can be so necessary or urgent as to hinder us from taking our daily refection. Now prayer, the food of the soul, is as necessary for the soul as food is for the body. And if it happens that business must be attended to at the hours appointed for daily spiritual refection, the person should repair his loss by taking some free time for his prayer. If that is denied him, he ought, in the judgment of Aquaviva, the General of the Jesuits, to solicit his Superiors to grant him some relaxation from his

employment. This his Superior is obliged to grant him, or God will demand a severe account from the Superior for the harm which will come to his subject's soul for want of what alone can support his spirit, and enable him to discharge profitably the duties of his calling.

Sometimes through sloth, distractions, or remorse for imperfections committed, the soul finds a difficulty in applying herself to prayer. If she yield to her disinclination, even with the promise of doing better in future, she will find on the following day that she has less mind to pray than ever, and will be in danger of altogether neglecting her recollections. If she have not the same excuse as before, her corrupt nature will readily provide another, and the longer she delays, the less inclined she will be for prayer. The ancient rabbis wisely observed: He that puts off the hour of doing any good duty till another time, that hour will put him off and delay him.* He will be less capable of doing his duty than before on account of some new impediment. But if the soul, by using some violence with herself, breaks through discouragements to prayer, she will acquire such courage and grace from God, that afterwards her employments will impede her but little.

The benefit of this advice is well illustrated by an incident recorded by Johannes a Jesu Maria, General of the Discalced Carmelites. He relates that a certain gentleman, a penitent of his, was accustomed daily at a fixed time to recollect himself in prayer. On one occasion, when engaged with another on some business of consequence, the clock struck the hour appointed for his prayer. The gentleman abruptly broke off the conversation, excusing himself by saying he had an affair to attend to so urgent that it could neither be delayed nor omitted. Thus dismissing his friend, he retired to his recollection. His fidelity and diligence did not go unrewarded. God deigned to visit him in an extraordinary

* 'Qui protrudit horam, hora protrudit ipsum.'

manner with some kind of supernatural contemplation, such as he had never before experienced.

That the devout soul may be able to attend to the business of businesses, as St. Bernard calls it, she should so arrange her daily employments that they stand not in her way. Let her, if need be, make note of the various engagements and duties of the day, lest her memory betray her. Then, beginning the morning with a serious recollection, which will sanctify the day's work, let her endeavour to despatch her tasks with such care and diligence that when the time for her evening recollection approaches, her mind may not be burdened and her prayer distracted by her external employments.

It is morally impossible in the religious state to find any employment that so wholly and constantly takes up one's thoughts and time as not to leave one hour each day to give to God. If such there were, it would be absolutely unlawful, as being destructive of the obligation of a Christian, much more of a religious. No excuse can justify the habitual neglect of a duty so essential.

If on account of some particular affair the soul be unable to secure the whole time for her appointed recollection, she should take as much of it as she can, or take some other hour of the day or the night. Let her at least preserve a thirst and love for prayer, and by fervent upliftings of her soul to God, as her business permits, and by additional mortification, especially of the tongue, let her endeavour to repair the loss of a set recollection.

Souls not to be discouraged by distractions.

If the soul cannot disentangle her mind from distractions, aridities, and solicitudes in prayer, let her not be discouraged, but pursue her prayers as best she can, preserving as much resignation and tranquillity, at least in the superior soul, as possible, and let the sight of her imperfections humble but not disquiet her. Let her not forget that God is as present to her in spirit, and as loving during her greatest desolations,

as He was in her clearest recollections, and that now is the time to show her fidelity to God by adhering to Him in the summit of her spirit, though her internal senses are distracted by images of business and her affections disordered by solicitudes.

The disturbed soul may take comfort from the observations of Fr. Benet Canfield. He shows that in the midst of the greatest troubles, afflictions, passions, and distractions, the soul may truly control the operations of its superior part, which is not dependent on the senses, internal or external. She can direct her spirit to God, making choice of Him as her final end, submitting herself to Him with resignation and love (even for sending her such trials), as well as in her greatest solitude and most peaceful introversion. This is best done without violence or impetuosity, but with great tranquillity, darting a spiritual glance on God. By this means she may be as truly and effectually united to God, though not according to sense, in the midst of these troubles as in her greatest sensible unions.

Such souls will reap a blessing.

The soul that behaves herself thus may rest assured that God, Who lays the office on her, does it not for her harm, but for her good, to give her occasion of exercising virtues, which otherwise she would have wanted (at least, in perfection), and to test her fidelity to Him amid encumbrances and temptations. By these virtues she will make great progress in solid charity, if not in the light of contemplation. Retaining a love of prayer, and practising it as best she can, she will be in an excellent disposition to profit by the leisure and solitude she will enjoy at the termination of her office. She will then make wonderful progress in the ways of contemplation. Thus she will realize that, though office has its perils, God will increase proportionately His grace and help.

For want of this watchfulness and care over their interior, it is to be greatly feared that many religious spend

their lives in employments to some extent, perhaps, beneficial to others, but of little profit to themselves—nay, sometimes to their great prejudice. Some pass their time lecturing on philosophy or divinity; many more spend nearly their whole time in spiritual employments, preaching, hearing confessions, giving spiritual direction; but because these works are not performed in virtue of spiritual prayer they are often deficient in purity of intention, and lose much of their value before God. Hence, God's Spirit seldom blesses the work of such persons with much fruit.

CHAPTER XVII

PRAYER IN TIME OF SICKNESS

Prayer in time of sickness.

We must now turn to the second impediment to the exercise of internal prayer, viz., sickness. The state of sickness, though not very suitable in some respects for internal exercises, is really a more secure state than that of external employments ; for external employments are apt to draw our affections from God to external sensible objects, but in sickness everything tends rather to drive the soul to seek and adhere to God, since all other comforts fail her, and pleasures are become distasteful. Moreover, in sickness there are frequent occasions for exercising sublime resignation, and there are fewer solicitudes about temporal matters. The chief business of a sick person is to forbear, to keep a hold on patience. In a word, it is rather not-doing than doing.

As it deeply concerns souls to be well disposed in time of sickness, I purpose to give some general advice suitable to such as are well practised in internal ways. The advice will have reference chiefly to prayer and mortification, and may be used by the sick person in so far as it suits his spirit and case.

The danger of sickness.

An ancient holy man has justly observed that a spiritual life is a continual meditation on death, because the principal object of all our exercises is to prepare ourselves for the

day of account, that we may give it with joy and not with fear. So if the soul has not learnt beforehand how to bear herself in time of sickness, it will go hard with her, for then the understanding is obscured and the will is numbed. Her thoughts and care will be employed in avoiding pain, in passing the heavy time, or in trying to recover. If good thoughts enter her mind they are raised principally by fear. Passions rise and swell, immortifications follow thick one upon another; hence serious conversions are seldom granted in time of sickness. The soul that in health neglected God and despised the means of conversion cannot now expect an extraordinary or miraculous grace to work a sudden true conversion. If a whole life spent in painful mortifications and serious recollections is scarce sufficient to conquer the perverseness of our will and the adhesiveness of our affections which cling to sensible objects, what may we expect of a few interrupted inefficacious prayers or resolutions in sickness, suggested mainly by the fear of death and judgment, while the heart retains a secret love for those sinful delights which must now be abandoned? Hence St. Jerome utters these terrible words, that of those who defer their conversion till death, scarcely one in a hundred thousand is saved.

The soul should accept her sickness.

The soul should accept and embrace her sickness as a special gift of God, even though it comes through her own fault, as the criminal should accept with resignation the death he has deserved by his crimes. She ought, indeed, to be sorry for her faults which occasion such an effect; but the effect itself should be accounted as proceeding from the Divine will or providence. Indeed, the soul may even rejoice in the mercy of God, Who inflicts sharp punishment on her sins in this world, and gives her occasion to exercise resignation, by which she may hope to be spared in the world to come.

The soul may meet with great opposition in her inferior

nature. But let her not recede on that account from her resignation. Let her remember that it is her superior will, not the will of her inferior nature, that merits or demerits. If the soul so acts, the resistance, and the sickness too, will contribute to her merit and advancement.

Nor should the soul content herself with accepting her sickness once or twice. It should be almost her constant practice, especially in time of exceptional pain or weariness —nay, more, she should be willing that the pain or weariness should continue so long as it is God's will and pleasure.

She must be particularly watchful against a notable temptation which befalls good but imperfect souls. Her inferior nature will seek excuses to justify an impatient desire for recovery. It will suggest that sickness hinders her prayer and her service of God or of her neighbour. Then she persuades herself that her impatient desire for health is not to satisfy her nature, but in order that she may perform her spiritual duties more perfectly. But this is a delusion; for the true and perfect way of serving God is to serve Him in the way and under the conditions in which He has placed us. Hence an imperfect, interrupted prayer made with resignation in the midst of pains or troubles sent by God, will more advance the soul than the highest elevations without such afflictions.

It matters not if the soul cannot see clearly how her sufferings may benefit her. She is to refer all to the infinite wisdom and goodness of God, Who can bring light out of darkness. She must he content to be blindfolded, if such be His will, and to abide humbly in simplicity and in reverential awe at the inscrutable ways of Divine providence.

The soul may account herself as God's prisoner, chained, as it were, by her own weakness; debarred from the ordinary recreations, exercise, and so forth; denied what pleases the palate; become profitable to no

And regard herself the prisoner of God.

one, but burdensome to many; afflicted with bitter pains and sharper remedies: a grievous prison, indeed, yet a happy one for the soul that will make good use of it. Unless the spiritual taste of the soul has sickened with the body, she may increase wonderfully in spiritual liberty, health, and strength, by accepting with indifference these inconveniences, and by mortifying any excessive desire for remedies, not desiring to escape, except as and when God shall ordain.

Spiritual exercises must not be neglected.

Above all things, the soul must be deeply impressed with the truth that sickness will not justify the neglect of her exercises of mortification and prayer, the essential duties of an internal life. These are as necessary in sickness as in health, and if they are neglected the soul will become the more sick of the two, and exposed to greater danger than the body. Assuredly if sickness does not produce the good fruits of patience and resignation, it will produce the contrary. Good effects can result only from mortification and prayer.

Especially mortification.

First, with regard to mortification. This is indeed a seasonable time for its exercise. Ample opportunity is constantly afforded: pains and weakness in the body; fear, grief, and other disturbing passions in the mind—often more insupportable than outward torments. Against all these temptations the soul must be armed.

Fear of death should be mortified.

Among internal temptations the greatest and most painful is the fear of death, especially its consequences—judgment and hell. Without these a faithful Christian could not rationally fear death, for he knows that death is not only the lot of all mankind, but that to the Christian it is the door of eternal happiness. Should the fear of death remain in his inferior nature, the superior reason should contradict it and make it the occasion of a very profitable mortification.

But the fear of what may follow death is usually what

most afflicts and dejects imperfect souls that are conscious of their many defects, the little penance done for them, and the weakness of their love of God—a weakness which is proved by their very fear, which would be expelled by perfect charity. Such souls are indeed difficult to encourage. They will not be persuaded to mortify their fear, or resign themselves to bear it, which would be a most profitable exercise. On the contrary, they think in this case it is scarcely fitting or lawful for them to do so.

And anxiety about future state.

I do not mean to say that these souls should be indifferent as to what becomes of them after death. No; resignation lies in the soul being content not to know the way God will dispose of her after death. Her anchor is hope, which she ought to cherish and strengthen all she can. And this is best done by making as few reflections on herself as possible, and by employing all her thoughts and affections directly upon God. Divine love is at least the principal, if not the only, virtue that brings souls to beatitude. Timid souls, therefore, even though their fears were well founded, should argue thus with themselves: The way to procure and strengthen love is by fixing the mind upon the mercies, goodness, and perfections of God, and to contradict or forget all motives of servile fear, the greatest enemy of love. What folly! Because they are imperfect they wilfully continue in their imperfections by nourishing their root, which is fear! Surely at the close of our lives we ought to practise, in the best manner we can, the actions that are best and most acceptable to God—to renounce ourselves, and to contemplate and trust Him, and abandon ourselves wholly to Him.

Let, then, the afflicted soul not only bear her ignorance with patience, but let her with loving resignation rejoice with God in His eternal secret purposes and decrees concerning her in time and in eternity. Let her freely assent that God should reserve such secrets to His own breast,

acknowledging therein His Divine wisdom and goodness, which moved Him (doubtless for our good) to conceal from us things whose knowledge would breed security, negligence, and perhaps pride, in our corrupt hearts. Let her desire to know nothing, and to have nothing, but what, when, and how it pleases His Divine Majesty.

Such behaviour of the soul towards her Creator and Redeemer, to Whom she belongs, is as just and reasonable as it is acceptable to God, and in the end will most assuredly bring her to happiness. But to be dejected and disquieted because God will not reveal His secret purposes is most unreasonable, and can proceed from nothing but natural pride and self-love. Deliberately to yield to unquietness on such grounds is unworthy of God, and utterly useless to the soul herself. Assuredly God will not alter the course of His providence to satisfy our natural inordinate desires.

Uncertainty of perseverance in the state of innocence did not disturb Adam's tranquillity of mind, though he knew one sin would utterly wreck his happiness. But in our state we know that even after thousands of sins one act of true conversion to God, and of living resignation to His will, is enough to restore us.

The soul, however, should consider that God, Who has denied her an assurance and forbidden her to presume, has yet commanded her to hope and to take comfort in that hope. And though her inferior nature may find little relief, she should still persist in frequent, earnest acts of hope; for the greater the repugnance in her inferior nature, the more generous and acceptable to God are such acts. Her acts, however, must not be grounded on confidence in her innocence or worth. However perfect the soul might be, a good opinion of herself would be but a rotten foundation for hope. Her hope should rest only on the free mercies of God and the merits of His Son.

Moreover, let her exercise these acts, not as acts of her own will, but as acts of God's Will, Who has commanded us thus to hope—a far more perfect and divine way. She may, besides, make use of considerations and motives by reading comforting promises in Sacred Scripture to incline her will to conform itself to the Divine Will. And when once a soul has brought herself to perfect conformity, there remains to her no hell or purgatory, no more than to God Himself, for where there is no self-will there is nothing but the Divine Will, which is God Himself. According to the measure of our conformity, so will be the measure of our happiness.

As for pain or grief arising from scruples about confessions, they have been sufficiently dealt with in the Second Book. Such scrupulous souls must submit absolutely to the advice of their director, transcending all imaginations and opposition in their inferior nature. Especially must the soul be careful not to yield to the suggestions of fear, which is the only temptation left by which the devil can disquiet timid souls to whom pleasure and ambition are now without savour. If she yield to fear she will be drawn from God, from resignation to Him, from confidence in His mercies—virtues of all others most proper at such a time.

Also temptations to despair, etc.

Sometimes souls are assailed in sickness with temptations to infidelity or despair. When so assailed, the soul must not resist by reasoning or arguing with the temptation, but rather by turning the mind away from it, neglecting it, and fixing her thoughts with resignation and confidence on God. This method requires no study, no subtlety of intellect, to defeat the enemy who is able to entangle even the most learned person that dares to contend with him, trusting in his abilities. And though the remedy is so simple, it is sufficient to extinguish even his most fiery darts. Indeed, this expedient of turning the mind from all

objects but God, and adhering to Him, is an universal remedy for all temptations; it is always at hand, and is the usual remedy of the souls for whom these instructions are principally written.

To this purpose we may relate a sad story recorded by Cardinal Bellarmine in his book *De Arte bene Moriendi*. There were two doctors in the University of Padua famous for their disputations in Scholastic Theology. One of them died, and by an agreement previously made, appeared to his friend. The soul seemed in a terrible state, all burning with flames, and gave the following account of what brought him to that unhappy condition. 'A little before expiring,' said he, 'the devil suggested to me doubts and arguments against the Divinity of our Lord. Trusting to my own abilities, I undertook to answer them, but was so pressed by new replies that in the end I was overcome, renounced the Catholic doctrine, assented to the Arian heresy, and in that state expired, receiving this reward of heresy—a just judgment on my pride.' The living companion, astonished at this account, revealed the case to some pious friends, from whom he received advice exactly similar to that given above. He took to heart the advice, and spent the remainder of his life more in prayer and penance than in study. Approaching his end not long after, he was assailed by the same temptation as his friend. The devil required of him an account of his faith, but could get no answer from him other than this: 'I believe what the Church teaches.' On being asked what the Church taught, he answered: 'The Church teaches what I believe.' These words he often repeated in the hearing of those who assisted him. By this means he eluded the subtlety of the enemy and passed into heaven, as was proved by his appearing afterwards in great glory to some of his counsellors.

With regard to mortifications about external things: this is a duty which belongs to every state, and is as necessary

in the infirmary as in the refectory. Everywhere there lies a snare to be avoided, an enemy to be combated. He who slothfully omits the practice of mortification one day, will the next be still less disposed to it, his inferior nature gaining strength against the spirit. Thus, though sickness be a temptation and a snare, when well used it becomes an occasion of victory over impatience and self-love, and a means of advancement in spiritual perfection. Mortification of sensual pleasure.

The mortifications, then, suitable to the time of sickness, are these: We must not be drawn into impatience by the pains and inconveniences of our sickness; nor yield to an immoderate gratification of our corrupt nature by desiring or seeking unfitting or unlawful remedies, or too pleasing meats. Lastly, we must take heed of spiritual sloth and neglect of devotion to God, of which we shall speak presently.

Impatience should be mortified by restraining the tongue from breaking out into complaints or murmurings, and the mind from yielding to melancholy and discontent. But enough has been said on this subject in the Second Book; the advice there given can easily be applied to the subject of sickness. I will add only two things: the sick person should bear in mind that impatience is harmful, not only to the soul, but also to the body; while, on the contrary, peace of mind and mortified temperance—heavenly ornaments of the soul—are efficacious instruments for the restoration of health; because then the patient will not refuse, through immortification, the bitter things prescribed for him, nor greedily seek pleasing things that are harmful. Next, patience should be preserved, at least in the superior soul, though violence of pain may sometimes force the patient to groan, or maybe to cry out. If this should afford relief, it is not wholly to be condemned.

Next, the sensual appetite must be mortified and moderated in sickness. This must not be understood to mean that it

is unlawful to seek or desire proper remedies, but that it should be done without too much solicitude and anxiety of mind. In case proper remedies cannot be had, a contented submission of mind is an admirable exercise of virtue of great profit; for here the soul will see the Will of God working for her greater good. We have a perfect example of this in our Lord, Who was grievously tormented with thirst as he hung upon the cross. He asked for refreshment, but when they offered Him only gall to inflame His thirst the more, He complained not.

Then, again, though our sensual nature must be restrained alike in sickness as in health, there is yet this difference, that many delicacies and comforts which would be unbecoming in a spiritual person in health, may be quite allowable and expedient in sickness. Only care should be taken to act under the direction of the spirit, with discretion, and for the good of the spirit—*i.e.*, in such a way as not to hinder internal exercises, and also because such is God's will. For sickness must not be made a cloak for undue liberty and the indulgence of sensual appetite, for then sickness may become more agreeable and pleasant than health. It matters not whether the body, as such, has ease or not; what matters is the condition of the spirit. If bodily ease be a help to the spirit, let it be permitted for that purpose. For, as St. Bernard observes, 'As man was not made for the woman, but the woman for man, so spiritual exercises were not made for corporal, but corporal for spiritual.'

Mortification of the will recommended.

Souls must account themselves obliged to maintain during sickness their internal exercises, though in a different manner. Though forced to allow a little more to the body than in health, they should increase the mortification of the will—a mortification far more pure and perfect than the other. Their minds should reflect on the benefits which sickness brings with it, and endeavour to possess themselves

of them. They should consider that now they have frequent occasion of exercising patience and resignation, the greatest blessings to a soul; and that they have opportunity for freer, purer, and less distracted recollections than when occupied with their ordinary employments. Thus prayer and mortification will attend on one another. In a word, they are now in the state by which the greatest saints have advanced to perfection more surely and speedily than by years of voluntary labours and austerities.

Thauler has observed that the souls of the most loved and perfect servants of God are full of divine love, and their bodies full of pains; that when they feel no pain or afflictions they greatly fear lest God has forgotten them. But comfort returns when God visits them with any bodily or worldly afflictions; for then they are in the state that best disposes them for the divine union.

Our Lord's sufferings.

Never are the sufferings of our Lord so well understood as when the soul is in pain. Then she sees and tastes God's love for her. If the pains are bearable, they invite the soul to union with God by express acts of resignation. But if they are so excessive that the soul becomes incapable of making express formal prayer, then the mere bearing of the pains with patience and peace of mind is a most sublime and efficacious prayer. Then is the season for those groans unutterable, which, St. Paul says, the Holy Spirit suggests to suffering, humble, and devout souls.

Pursuit of internal prayer enjoined.

Above all things, the soul must not think that God has sent her the trial of sickness to dispense her from her daily recollections, but rather that she may pursue them more efficaciously. She may, perhaps, be unable to observe exactly her ordinary times of prayer; her prayers, too, may be subject to great distractions. Still, if she lifts up her spirit as best she can, offers her pains and distractions to God, is watchful not to give way at other times to inordinate desires or impatience, but maintains a continual state

of resignation, she will have little reason to complain of the imperfections of her prayer.

The soul can have no excuse for neglecting prayer. The times for it may often be observed more strictly in sickness than in health. For who would trouble or interrupt such a one against his will? or who would not permit him to be alone to rest if he have a mind to do so? However, if need be, he can use forethought, a little trouble, or excuses to prevent hindrance or interruption.

It is exceedingly difficult to exercise discursive meditation during pain or any great illness. Acts of the will, or, better still, aspirations, are a much more suitable exercise. If the soul has not yet come to exercise acts habitually, it is wise to use them sometimes in health, so that when overtaken by sickness she may not be altogether at a loss.

Among express voluntary acts, the exercise of total resignation is the most perfect, and generally the most profitable. But if the soul finds herself indisposed for such acts, she may content herself with devotions of an inferior nature, as to the Saints, her angel guardian, and especially to our Blessed Lady.

They who are only infirm or sickly are, as regards prayer, in much the same condition as in health. If suffering arises from outward pain only, without sickness, it may be found to benefit the prayer. Such pains in themselves may prove a profitable prayer if the sufferer, with quietness, and submission to the Divine will, offers them continually to God.

Sicknesses of a more serious nature indispose the patient for prayer, besides the distractions caused by frequent application of remedies, and so forth. No precise advice can be given in such cases. The devout soul must consider the circumstances of her case, and practise mortification and prayer as best she can. She will easily discover when, how long, and in what manner she should pray; where she is to mortify herself; how far she may yield to

the desires and necessities arising from her illness. In these things the soul must be guided by her own judgment and discretion, and especially by the Spirit of God. He, doubtless, will teach her, if she will but attend to His holy inspirations.

Prayer, universal remedy.

It was said that the universal remedy for all internal temptations is actual prayer and conversion to God. This advice holds good for all souls in every state, but especially for contemplative souls, who are not accustomed to invent motives and arguments. This advice is also most necessary for timid and scrupulous souls. However, I would not oblige all imperfect souls on every suspicion of a temptation to turn to prayer, but only when necessity and a reasonable fear of defeat shall require it. On other occasions they may content themselves with an intermittent uplifting of the mind to God, deferring formal prayer till the next appointed recollection. For to bind them to prayer without necessity upon every temptation would be too great a burden on such souls, who cannot easily make a serious introversion.

God seldom sends great sicknesses to spiritual persons at the beginning lest they should be hindered from praying. But when the habit of prayer has been acquired, it will be strengthened by sickness. As bodily strength decays, prayer will proportionately grow more natural, profound, and spiritual. It is very doubtful that the prayer of meditation will be benefited by sickness.

There is one other consideration which I would urge on the soul as a warning against the neglect of mortification and prayer in sickness, and it is this: In every sickness there is at least some danger present; and in the event of death occurring when the soul is in a tepid, negligent state, she will assuredly be judged by God according to the state in which death finds her. She will be in danger of losing the fruit of the good resolutions and purposes she made when in health; or, at least, she will have much reason to

suspect them of insincerity, as now that the time for putting them into practice has come, they have proved ineffectual. Scrupulous souls, above all, will be in a sorry plight if they neglect to combat their scruples by simple obedience and by transcending their fears. But, on the other hand, no soul can have a stronger assurance of eternal life than the soul which has made a sanctified use of sickness.

Advice to nurses of sick.

I will conclude with a word of advice to those who wait on the sick. They should not shirk or shrink from the mortifications which attend the office of nurse. They should bear with the irritability or temper of their patients, and not judge them for small excesses. They should freely and charitably administer what is requisite for the sick under their care, being assured that God will never be wanting to those who have left all things for Him, and now depend upon Him alone. God will enrich the attendants for their charity, rather than suffer them to be endangered by it. It may be for the sake of the sick that they are preserved in health. Let them imitate the tenderness of our holy Father for the sick, and take to heart his admonitions addressed to those who wait upon them.*

* 'Before all things and above all things care is to be had of the sick, that they be served in very deed as Christ Himself, for He hath said: "I was sick, and ye visited Me." And, "What ye have done unto one of these little ones, ye have done unto Me." And let the sick themselves remember that they are served for the honour of God, and not grieve the brethren who serve them by unnecessary demands. Yet must they be patiently borne with, because from such as these is gained a more abundant reward' (Rule, chap. xxxvi.).

CHAPTER XVIII

SPIRITUAL DISCRETION

INTERNAL prayer seriously pursued is so contrary to our natural inclination that it cannot but cause some trouble and uneasiness in our physical nature. It is apt to reduce the vigour of the body, to quench animal spirits, to cool the heat of passions, which often afford food for temptation. But, on the other hand, it makes amends even to Nature herself, contributing much to the prolongation of life by the practice of moderation in diet, quietness of the passions, and contentment of mind. Proofs of this may be seen in the Fathers of the desert; and later in St. Romuald, who lived to the age of one hundred and twenty, and St. David of Wales to a hundred and forty. Effect of spiritual exercises on the body.

However, even if it were otherwise it would matter not, for the soul is not made to serve the body, but the body the soul. If one must suffer for the benefit of the other, it is most just that the loss should lie with the body. Besides, there is scarcely any study or exercise of mind which does not in some degree abridge life or debilitate its functions; yet we do not on that account forego them, even though they will not benefit the soul in the future life; much less, then, ought spiritual and divine exercises to be put aside for such pretexts. The body for the spirit.

However, some regard must be paid to the body, lest it be too much impaired by the exercises of the spirit, per-

formed with excessive violence and impetuosity, and this not so much for the body's sake as for the spirit's. For in this life the soul cannot work without the body, so that if the body be too much weakened it will be unable to co-operate with and serve the soul. The brief gains obtained by a few impetuous exercises will be dearly bought by both body and soul contracting a permanent incapacity to work at all. We must not, therefore, stretch our minds after lofty things beyond our strength, lest we be plunged into darkness, from which will proceed intolerable perplexities. Nor must we force excessively our affections even to good objects, or suffer them to flow too violently; nor must we exhaust our bodily strength by unnecessary external austerities.

As for the discomfort and delicate health, without excessive weakness, which usually accompany a spiritual course of life, these may well be endured, considering the unspeakable benefits such a life brings to the soul. Yet for our comfort this uneasiness will continually diminish; for, as Harphius observes, the soul after long practice will attain to such facility in elevating herself to God that the practice will become, as it were, natural to her. In this we see the goodness of Divine providence to souls—how He tempers the exercises of the spirit to the needs of the body. For when the body was vigorous and able to endure more He gave ruder and more laborious exercises; but now that by long-continued efforts it has become so feeble that any violent application of the spirit or rude external mortification (now no longer necessary) would overwhelm it, the exercises are made easy, peaceable, silent, yet infinitely more efficacious than formerly.

Yet all must be done with discretion.

Now the virtue by which we may avoid injury to body or soul is that supernatural discretion by which the soul is able to maintain a just mean, and escape vicious extremes in the practice of all spiritual duties. It is justly called a

supernatural virtue, because God alone can bestow it; all the wisdom and philosophy of the world are but folly and blindness in these matters. It is obtained principally by prayer, with the use of reasonable abstraction and attention to Divine inspirations. By these means we shall acquire an habitual heavenly light to direct us in all things according to the needs of our particular disposition and abilities, for no one can be in all things a rule to another.

Discretion in mortification.

Much has already been said incidentally in these chapters on the subject of discretion. I will therefore content myself here with a few considerations relative to the regulation by discretion of some of the principal duties of the contemplative life. Discretion, the mistress of all virtues, surely deserves some special treatment, as without it all other virtues are imprudent—that is, not virtues at all.

First, then, with regard to the duty of mortification—that is, mortifications which are imposed on us by God directly, or indirectly through others, especially Superiors. And let it first be noted that Superiors ought rarely to impose mortifications voluntarily on their subjects, for so many circumstances are required to make them judicious that a large measure of illumination from God is necessary. For to be prudently imposed the Superior must see clearly that the subject will probably make good use of them, that while benefiting him in one way he will not harm him more in another. Moreover, he must take heed that others are not scandalized by his conduct.

The same observations apply to persons who would voluntarily assume mortifications. Harphius points out the want of discretion sometimes shown here. He says: 'Such kinds of strange, odd, and uncouth mortifications as are imposed and practised in some communities ought not to be voluntarily assumed by any one, as if with the object of being despised by others.'

The author of the *Abridgment of Perfection* justly

attributes indiscretion to those who never give themselves rest, but will always have some cross or another, exterior or interior. For, says he, 'The highest perfection is not to desire to be always suffering, but to be content to suffer all that by God's providence shall befall us.' This contentment is lost by continual anxiety to be always on the rack.

Harphius taxes in like manner those who think themselves ready for afflictions, and complain that they lack occasions for exercising resignation. To such a one he says: 'You deceive yourself by pride; God sees that as yet you are not strong enough for extraordinary trials, for if He did He would not fail to furnish occasions. He would send an Angel from heaven to exercise a soul rather than let her suffer loss for want of mortifications.' Therefore, let not souls be solicitous, nor devise mortifications as if they thought God had forgotten them. Remarkable examples of this providence of God may be seen in the Life of Thauler. Among others it is related that God reprehended in his sleep the layman who converted Thauler for assuming certain austerities. We may also mention a passage in the Life of Suso, where it is stated that Suso dissuaded one of his spiritual daughters from undertaking some great corporal mortifications, though he himself, by a special call from God, used very sharp ones.

Let the soul, therefore, seriously practise that mortification of mortifications, pure internal prayer; and with it let her join a diligent use of those mortifications which attend her state of life or are sent to her by God, not omitting those most efficacious internal mortifications, viz., acts of humility and self-annihilation. By so doing she will have little need to complain of the want of exercise for this virtue. For corporal austerities do not bring to perfection interior souls by their severity, but by their fitness for the present needs of the soul. So that some delicate or infirm souls of good disposition advance more by ordinary and

trifling mortifications than others who consume their strength and powers with severe fasts, chains, and disciplines. As Cassian says in the preface to his *Institutions*: 'If a reasonable measure of mortification that is not ordinarily beyond our power be observed, there will be the same perfection of observance where the external abilities are unequal.'

Use of sensible devotion.

Next, there is much scope for the exercise of discretion in the use of sensible devotion. 'There are some souls,' says Harphius, 'so carried away, so eaten up with self-love, and so self-willed in the use of sensible devotion, that no advice from persons, however experienced, will avail to restrain them, till it is too late, till they find themselves unable to apply themselves seriously to the exercises of the spirit. Nevertheless, though they have brought themselves to such a pass by their indiscretion, they may gain much merit if they accept their infirmity with humility, patience, and resignation.' We ought, then, to mortify sensible fervour rather than encourage it, applying to ourselves the words of the wise man: '*Hast thou found honey? Eat of it what may be sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled and vomit it up*' (Prov. xxv. 16).

All the merit of sensible devotion consists in the concurrence of the superior will; without this it will not help to raise the soul out of her natural state. Indeed, the more she is inundated with sensible consolations, the more she will grow in self-love and be delighted by a kind of spiritual gluttony. She must therefore mortify sensible devotion, and must be careful not to rest in it, but turn herself to the more efficacious acts of the superior will. Unless the soul grows more humble by the use of sensible devotion, she will be perverted by it and miss the purpose for which God gave it.

However, imperfect souls must not violently strain themselves to work purely in the spirit, but should use sensible

devotion in moderation to help the spirit forward. Nor, on the other hand, ought they to be carried away by a greedy affection for its sweetness, a sweetness more delightful than any other sensible pleasure; still less should they neglect the duties of their state for the sake of indulging in it.

Discretion in meditation.

How far discretion is to be exercised in meditation has also been sufficiently declared when dealing with meditation. Indeed, souls during that exercise must be directed rather by the discretion of others than their own, for that exercise scarcely affords enough supernatural light to enable the soul to be her own guide. Discretion must be used to determine whether the soul is fit for meditation; how long she should continue in it; and how much time is to be given to the use of the understanding, and how much to the will. The rule in these things must not be custom, but the profit of the soul as disclosed by experience.

In immediate acts.

When the soul has sufficiently practised meditation to be ripe for the immediate acts of the will, she will have enough light and discretion to judge what acts are most suitable for her; what time should be spent in each recollection; when and what pauses are necessary; when she should change for a higher exercise.

Discretion here is principally exercised by controlling a desire to imitate the Saints of old time, some of whom could remain almost continually in some act tending to God without giving way to any wandering thoughts. By this means they were almost constantly in internal conflict. An indiscreet attempt to imitate such examples, or a too rapid and violent repetition of acts one upon another, would so oppress ordinary souls that they would become almost incapable of ever praying again.

They who do not use set recollections must frequently force themselves to interior acts towards God. Nay, they must do it as often as they can without regard to time, whether after meals or before sleep. Even when they have

done all, their progress will be but small for want of more prolonged, unbroken exercises.

Lastly, discretion must be used even in those exercises to which perfect souls are invited by God Himself, the exercise of aspirations and pure upliftings of the spirit. For these exercises so weaken and consume our physical nature that if souls were to indulge in them whenever they think they are able—and this is almost continually, so perfectly are they disposed towards God—they would render themselves quite unable to do any service for God in the future. Let them, therefore, use a wise moderation in the use of aspirations at times other than their set recollections. And in aspirations.

In this connection we may quote a story told by Harphius. A certain devout Franciscan, Brother Roger, related of himself that a hundred times during Matins he was drawn upwards in spirit to a higher knowledge of the Divine secrets. These invitations he forcibly resisted, feeling sure that if he had given his soul free scope to fix the eye of his understanding upon the objects represented to him, he would have been so plunged into the abyss of Divine incomprehensibility, and so wholly drawn out of himself, that he never would have returned alive from such contemplation. But there is little danger of indiscretion in souls so spiritual and so wholly in God's hands that He can do with soul and body what He lists.

Harphius also describes another state, less sublime, enjoyed by some souls. These souls are so languishing in their love of God, in such impatient ardour and thirst for Him, that the body grows quite faint and, as it were, withers away. He calls them 'martyrs of love.' By this languishing love, I conceive, is meant a love much in the sensitive nature, though its object is God. It is felt about the heart much after the manner of a violent though chaste love between absent friends of different sexes. I take it, therefore, to be the highest degree of sensible devotion. Har- Languishing love less perfect than purely spiritual love.

phius is of opinion that these martyrs, expiring through excess of love, pass straight to heaven, being already purified in the purgatory and fire of love. Although no doubt they die in a most secure state, it may well be thought that they do not escape some degree of Purgatory for yielding imprudently to the impulses of nature in the exercise of this love. And, though truly divine, it is far less perfect than that pure love which in perfect contemplation is exercised in the intellectual soul without any overflow or change in the body. The tree of love should not be uprooted while there is a capacity or a disposition to bring forth more fruit.

CHAPTER XIX

THE PRAYER OF INTERIOR SILENCE *

Prayer of interior silence.

BEFORE concluding this subject some account must be given of the prayer of interior silence. It is closely allied to the prayer of forced acts, but the soul's action in it is

* The teaching of this chapter is based on the book of a Spanish mystic, Antonio de Rojas, entitled *The Life of the Spirit*, which both in the Spanish and in the French translation received many ecclesiastical approbations. It was, however, put on the Index Expurgatorius in 1689, fifty years after Father Baker's death, and thirty years after the publication of *Sancta Sophia*. Had they written after the condemnation, Fathers Baker and Cressy would not have spoken as they did of De Rojas' book ; but the point of importance for us is whether there is anything unsound in that portion of De Rojas' teaching which is reproduced in this chapter of *Sancta Sophia*. The precise propositions for which the *Vita dello Spirito* was condemned are not known, but it was a book that undoubtedly contained more than the teaching reproduced by Father Baker. Dr. Sweeney, in his reprint of *Sancta Sophia* (Burns and Oates, 1876), says that De Rojas's teaching here reproduced evidently recommends some of the points of Molinos' Quietism, condemned in 1687, and some of those of the Semi-Quietism of Fénelon and Madame Guyon, condemned in 1699 ; at least, it would require a very forced and unnatural interpretation to present his meaning in any other light. But in the *Dublin Review* of October, 1876, appeared a long article on *Sancta Sophia*, unsigned, but generally known to be by one who is considered among the best theologians in England†—an article to which we direct the attention of readers of this book. His opinion is that in the teaching of De Rojas, cited by Father Baker, there is nothing unorthodox unless it be the

† Bishop Hedley.

different. It may be called the first-fruits of forced acts, and is an admirable preparation for the soul that is nearly ripe for perfect contemplation. It may be described as a prayer of internal silence, quietness, and repose. There is no meditation, nor even express direct acts of the will. It is a virtual, habitual loving attention to God rather than a formal direct tending to Him.

Preparation for it.

The immediate preparation recommended for the exercise of this prayer is as follows: (1) The soul should first examine her conscience diligently and prudently. (2) Then she may make a hearty and sincere act of contrition for her sins and negligences from a motive, if possible, of the goodness, love, and mercy of God. (3) Next, she is to frame an act of pure and entire resignation of herself into God's hands, intending to perform her recollection purely for God's glory, renouncing all inferior personal interests and pleasure. (4) She may, if need be, meditate a little upon one of the mysteries of the Incarnation and Passion of our Lord; or make some forced acts, or ejaculatory prayers. (5) Finally, she must make a firm act of faith, acknowledging God's presence in the centre of her soul, and placing hers.lf before Him with profound reverence, humility, and love.

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recommendation of the prayer of interior silence to beginners, a point whereon Father Baker expressly differs from De Rojas. The teaching of this chapter could be paralleled and illustrated by many passages from the writings of St. John of the Cross—*e.g.*, speaking of the transition from meditation to contemplation, which St. John holds takes place 'very quickly, especially in the case of religious,' he says: 'The soul must be lovingly intent upon God, without specifically eliciting other acts beyond those to which He inclines it; it must be, as it were, passive, making no efforts of its own—purely, simply, and lovingly intent upon God, as a man who opens his eyes with loving attention. . . . When the soul feels that it is silent and listens, its loving attention must be most pure, without a thought of self, in a manner self-forgotten, so that it shall be wholly intent upon hearing; for thus it is that the soul is free and ready for that which our Lord requires at its hands' (and much more to the same effect).—*The Living Flame*, stanza iii., § 6.

The soul should continue in the fourth and fifth steps of the preparation till she finds herself disposed to quit all express direct acts or affections, retaining, however, an implicit assurance, by a bare obscure faith, that God, Who is incomprehensible universal goodness, is really present in and to her. All that then remains for the soul to do is to continue with a humble and loving regard in the Divine presence in the character of a petitioner; not, indeed, making direct requests, but contenting herself with appearing before Him with all her wants and necessities, knowing that He sees all her needs perfectly without any information from her. Thus the soul with silent attention* regards God alone; she rejects the images of all objects whatever; she frames no particular requests, nor makes express acts towards God; but remains in an absolute silence of tongue and thought with a sweet, tacit consent of love in the will, permitting God to take entire possession of her soul as of a temple wholly belonging and consecrated to Him.† The exercise.

* The word *attention* here is of importance. Without attention this prayer would be mere idleness. The soul would fall into one of the errors of the Quietists, which have incurred the censures of the Church. The erroneous principle may be expressed in these words: Perfect contemplation is a state in which a man does not reason or reflect on God or himself, but passively receives the Divine light which is poured upon him without his exercising any acts, the mind remaining *in a state of inaction and inattention*. (See Butler's *Lives of the Saints*, vol. xi., p. 389.)

† This manner of prayer seems to be illustrated in an incident recorded in the life of the Curé of Ars. It is related that there was, in the parish of Blessed John Baptist Vianney, a certain simple peasant, poor in this world's goods, ignorant of learning, but rich in piety and virtue. He was remarkable for his devotion to our Blessed Lord in the Holy Sacrament. On going to work and on his way home he invariably entered the church to offer to God his love and homage. The holy curé watched him with delight, but could never detect the slightest movement of his lips. Being surprised at this, he one day asked him, 'My good man, what do you say to our Lord in those long visits you make to Him daily?' 'I say nothing to Him,' was the reply. 'I look at Him and He looks at me.'

In this state of prayer the soul behaves much like a humble, faithful, loving subject, who, from a sense of duty, with the deepest affection and respect, places himself in the presence of his sovereign. On entering into his presence he expresses sentiments of profound reverence, devotion, and fidelity; that done, he remains silent, immovable in his presence, yet always maintaining the respect and reverence he manifested on entering. He makes no requests, asks no favours, knowing well that his prince alone ought to dispose of all that he has; that his prince is most wise, and can judge best what to bestow upon him; and that the prince is so loving and generous that he will advance him far beyond his deserts. Now the reverence which he discloses towards his prince does not take the form of express reflections or words. He does not say: 'The King is here, to whom I owe all duty, love, and obedience.' Knowing him to be present, there is no need to keep repeating in thought or in word that he is so. As long as he exhibits all possible respect for his prince, it is needless to make repeated profession of it, externally or internally. He stands attentive, ready to hear and execute any commands. He does not eagerly undertake services on his own account, but patiently waits till the King informs him what is his will, and how he is to be served. Thus does the soul behave herself in God's presence, not renewing but only persevering in the virtue and fruit of those direct acts of faith, love, and service which she formed in the beginning of her exercise. If in this interior silence and emptiness God's Spirit suggests to her any pure affections, she is attentive and ready to entertain and exercise them quietly, and afterwards returns to her silence.

If during this silence the soul finds aridity, obscurity, or insensibility in her inferior nature, it will not prevent her from persevering in her silence and virtual exercise of faith, oblation, and resignation, together with quiet attention

to God's will and inspirations. If, however, she should forget herself, so that wandering thoughts or sensual affections should press upon her and withdraw her attention from God, she can easily recover her silent attention by renewing a short express act of faith in the Divine presence. But this will scarcely happen if the soul is watchful over herself, and expels all images that may cause her to interrupt her interior silence.

In this attention to God the soul is far from expecting any extraordinary illuminations, favours, or visitations. She accounts herself utterly unworthy of anything of the kind.

Lastly, the soul has no fear that this respectful silence is mere idleness; she knows it is the effect of love and respect. Indeed, an intellectual soul is all activity, so that it cannot continue a moment without some desires. If, then, she rejects all desire for created objects, she cannot but tend inwardly in her affections towards God; it was for this purpose that she placed herself in a posture of prayer. Her tending to God is much like the flight of an eagle. After a few vigorous flaps of the wings, it extends them, and by virtue of its first efforts it continues its flight for some distance with great swiftness, yet with as much stillness and ease as if it were reposing in its nest.

Such is the prayer of internal silence. It is recommended as a daily exercise by some writers, who give it about an hour in the morning and an hour at the evening recollection.

Its advantages.

The advantages which are attributed, not without reason, to this manner of prayer are: It causes far more profound recollections than any other kind of set internal prayer, because the soul, by a short meditation or exercise of faith, oblation, and so forth, having found Him Who is the centre of her repose, leaves all the rooms and apartments of sense, internal and external, void and empty, and passes to

those of the spirit, which are pure, clear, and secure. Next, it extremely diminishes the activity of the imagination and passions, suffering neither of them to stir. Moreover, God is most perfectly contemplated in this exercise, being apprehended simply and truly by faith in the superior soul. For as long as there are discourse in the understanding, images in the imagination, and feelings of tenderness in the heart, then God is not perfectly and entirely the object of the operations. God, says the prophet Elias, is not in the rushing wind (not in the stirrings of passions or of the imagination), but He is in the silent whisper of a soft air.* And, says David, His place of abode is in the clear and peaceful regions of the Spirit.† Lastly, by this exercise we come to the perfect operation of self-annihilation, self-forgetfulness, by which ourselves and all creatures are transcended and forgotten as though they did not exist ; nor can the devil find where to fasten a temptation. We present to God the temple of our soul empty, that He alone may possess it ; and this He will not fail to do, adorning it withal most richly, and making it fit for the reception of such an illustrious guest.

To these benefits we may yet add another ; and it is a great one, fruitful in many blessings—namely, that in this exercise all divine virtues are exercised in a very sublime manner. Faith is exercised, by which the soul, quitting all discourse and doubts, believes and even perceives the Divine presence by which she conquers the world, exalting herself so much above all created things that they pass out of her sight. Hope is exercised, because the soul, placing herself before God in the posture of a beggar, confidently expects that He will bestow upon her the knowledge of His will and the strength to fulfil it. Love, because the soul resolutely desires and seeks nothing but correspondence

* 'In spiritu non in commotionis,' etc. (3 Kings xix. 11).
† 'Factus est in pace locus ejus' (Ps. lxxv. 2).

with the Divine love. Resignation, because the soul forgets all private interests; she has nothing to ask for, not repose nor employment, but only what God would have her to do, enjoy, or suffer. Patience, because the soul must expect to suffer many aridities, desolations, obscurities, distractions, temptations, and other internal afflictions; hence Thauler calls an exercise much resembling this the afflicting exercise. Purity, because the soul is separated from all adhesion to creatures, being united to God only. Mortification, of which we have here the very essence; for when the soul acts in spirit only, then the flesh becomes dry and tasteless, as St. Gregory says. The flesh with all its desires is slain, as it were, and buried out of the way. The eyes see nothing pleasing to sense; the ears hear nothing; the tongue is silent; a curtain is drawn before all images in the memory; the will is separated from all created things, neither willing nor rejecting any of them, but permitting God to will for her. Obedience, because the understanding contradicts and restrains all discussion or arguments against anything that God commands. Humility in the highest degree, because the soul is, as it were, reduced to nothing. In a word, here is adoration, sacrifice, devotion, and all graces united together; here creatures are excluded, and God, with all His perfections, is alone exposed to all the faculties of the soul, that He may be contemplated by the mind; be embraced by the will; and be the sole object of all her operations. Here is abstraction in perfection; and all virtues, as Thauler says, are learnt in abstraction.

It is suitable for most souls.

This exercise seems fit for souls of almost every disposition. Learning is but of little assistance, nor need it be a hindrance. It excludes no other kind of prayer, exercise, or devotion, for any kind of prayer may be used to find God in the spirit. When He is found the soul chases away all objects that are not God, that she may be united to Him alone—knowing Him most perfectly by ignorance;

approaching Him by resting and refraining from all motion; conversing with Him most comfortably and profitably by silence. By this holy silence and pure recollected prayer the soul attains to a clear and happy experience of that which is obscurely apprehended by faith, and cannot be known by discursive meditation. This is that 'death of Angels' which St. Bernard desired, by which they regard not themselves, nor live in themselves, as the apostate Angels did, but in God alone, and God in them. There is here exercised only the most perfect act of the understanding—namely, simple intelligence. It is incapable of error, and the will seeks nothing, desires nothing, but enjoys all.

Another method of preparation.

Souls, however, must not consider themselves bound to use always the above-mentioned preparation; they should use their liberty. That, for instance, was an excellent preparation which the simple, devout old woman is said to have used when she began her devotions. 'O my God,' said she, 'let that which I wish come to Thee, and let that happen to me which Thou desirest.' Then, with a firm belief in God's presence, she abandoned herself into His hands, remaining more replenished with fervour and light in this silent busy idleness and negative knowledge than if she had exercised all the speculations of the schools or studious meditations of the cloister.

The exercise should not be used by beginners.

The author* of this exercise confidently recommends it to the imperfect as well as to the perfect, affirming that anyone may securely begin with it, as many have done, with great profit. But I conceive that beginners will require more than ordinary courage to persevere in it, for their understanding and inward senses are not yet sufficiently stored with good images to drive away vain distractions, nor are their wills sufficiently inflamed with holy desires. They are therefore likely to be terribly assaulted with

* Antonio de Rojas.

tedious aridities, passions, and distractions. They will often suspect that they spend most of their recollections in fruitless idleness, and so will fall into doubts, and will have recourse to disquieting consultations with others. If they can avoid this and go on resolutely, in spite of these discouragements, no doubt they will reap immense benefits from their prayer. But, considering the great temptations and dangers to which they would be exposed, I should say that it will be best not to venture upon this exercise at the beginning, nor till one has arrived at the practice of immediate acts; and to succeed in it, it will be necessary to use great abstraction of life, and to practise this internal silence at other times out of the hour of recollection, calming the busy working of the imagination, and stilling its movements at work, in the recitation of the Office, and other occasions.

The 'Prayer of Quiet.'

Though this exercise is at all times the same in substance, yet by long practice it grows more and more pure and spiritual; the silence and introversion grow more profound, the operations less perceptible, till in time it brings the soul to what St. Teresa calls the 'Prayer of Quiet,'* which is indeed perfect contemplation. The prayer of silence is but an imperfect imitation of it.

Aux écoutes.

Some spiritual writers describe this state of prayer by saying that the soul is then *aux écoutes* — that is, she is

* St. Teresa thus describes this state of prayer: 'This is a gathering together of the faculties of the soul within itself, in order that it may have the fruition of that contentment in greater sweetness; but the faculties are not lost, neither are they asleep: the will alone is occupied in such a way that, without knowing how it has become a captive, it gives a simple consent to become the prisoner of God, for it knows well what it is to be the captive of Him it loves. . . . The other two faculties help the will, that it may render itself capable of the fruition of so great a good; nevertheless, it occasionally happens, even when the will is in union, that they hinder it very much: but then, it should never heed them at all, simply abiding in its fruition and quiet.' —*Life of St. Teresa* (chap. xiv.).

watching and attending to what God will speak to her or work in her. This phrase appears very offensive and misleading to some, as though it implied that those who practise this prayer aspire to extraordinary visitations and favours—a thing far from their thoughts. They mean only by this phrase that the best disposition the soul can have for receiving the Divine light and for tending purely and spiritually to God is by silencing all noise of creatures and their images; by quieting the movements of the passions; by admitting no other operation of the understanding but simple intelligence of objects apprehended by faith; and lastly, by really embracing with the will no object but God Himself, without reflecting or professing that the will adheres to Him. Surely it is a far more perfect sign and proof of resignation in any difficulty or affliction really and quietly to embrace the Divine will in perfect silence than to busy oneself with protesting that one does embrace it; so also actually to love in truth is better than to declare that one loves.

The exercise is not idleness.

Though there is no distinct reflection or express acts of the will in this exercise, yet the soul is far removed from that mere cessation from all operation professed by the Illuminati. For here the soul acts like a tender mother who regards with unspeakable tenderness her most beloved child. She says nothing, nor forms any express distinct thought of which she can give an account. Yet her mind and will are both busy: the mind in one simple gaze has the force of many long discourses; the will in one long, quiet, continued application has the essence of a thousand distinct affections. Thus does the soul regard God. She is in His presence, and must needs behave towards Him with love, adoration, humility, resignation. What need is there to tell Him that she acknowledges His presence, or that she adores, loves, resigns herself to Him? She rather chooses the Psalmist's way of praising and serving God as the Hebrew

has it, followed by the Septuagint: '*Silence is praise to Thee, O Lord.*' Indeed, this is the most effectual and becoming praise, because it proceeds out of a deep sense of God's incomprehensible perfections and majesty, Whom the Seraphim contemplate by covering their faces, and glorify most perfectly in the profound and awful silence mentioned in the Apocalypse.

Concluding exhortation.

So much for the two inferior degrees of internal affective prayer. The remaining chapters of this book will be devoted to the blessed fruit of all our labour—perfect contemplation. The instructions following are not intended for the guidance of those who have attained to it, for they have a Divine light shining brightly in their hearts beyond all human instructions; but for the encouragement of those who tend to this divine state, which is so full of delight that they will find themselves abundantly recompensed for all the labours, pains, bitterness, or contradictions of the way. Nay, though the devout soul were not to attain to contemplation in this life, yet faithfully tending towards it to her last hour, she will not fail to receive a sufficient recompense of Divine light and grace here, with an inestimable comfort of mind at the hour of death. And afterwards she will be adorned with that peculiar crown of glory which is due to those who in this life aspire steadily to contemplation.

Let no excuses, therefore, be admitted, no obstacles tolerated, that will hinder souls, especially souls in contemplative orders, from pursuing the ways of prayer leading thither with all courage and perseverance. For, as St. Teresa observes, it is of great importance to have a resolute determination and fixed purpose never to desist from striving diligently, till we come at length to drink of the water of life, supernatural prayer. Labour for it therefore, come what will of your labour, though it cost you ever so great a

price. ever so much toil. Let us not be turned aside, though others murmur at it, though we attain not to it, but die by the way, though our heart faint or break asunder with excessive pains endured for it—nay, though the world be in an uproar against it, and would frighten us by telling of the dangers of the road.

CHAPTER XX

PERFECT CONTEMPLATION

So far the exercises of the devout soul have been exceedingly laborious. She has been obliged to use more or less pressure upon herself to lift the will above created things and apply it to God. She has struggled through the terrible opposition of the devil, of her corrupt nature, the instability of the imagination, the tumult of the passions, all which have hindered and distracted her in her recollections. Yet, notwithstanding, she has pursued her exercises; sometimes in light, sometimes in darkness; sometimes allured by sweetness; at other times afflicted, but not discouraged, by desolations. And in the end God crowns her courage and her patience by exalting her to a new, more perfect, divine exercise, the prayer of union, or contemplation. Contemplation in general.

Contemplation, in the generally accepted meaning of the word, signifies a clear, easy, mental view and quiet gazing on an object. It is the result and fruit of a diligent, laborious inquiry and search into the nature, qualities, effects, and circumstantial conditions of the object.

Now, there are different sorts of contemplation, according to the nature of the object contemplated, and the disposition or purpose of the person contemplating. There is first the contemplation, which may be called philosophical, practised by some learned heathens of old, and imitated by some in these days. It has for its object nothing higher than the Contemplation twofold.

perfection of knowledge and a delight in it. Others there were, and it is to be feared are still to be found, who sought principally a vain renown which they hoped to gain by their knowledge; so that whatever happened to be the object of their contemplation—things natural, moral, or even divine—self-love and pride was the end and purpose of it all. To this class of contemplation must also be referred those scholastic geniuses who spent much time in the study and minute examination of the mysteries of faith, but without having as the end of their labours the increase of divine love in their hearts. Nay, these are the more culpable, as Albertus Magnus observes (*Lib. de Adhaer. Deo*), in as much as they offend against a greater and supernatural light.

Others among them really intend, as their last and principal end, the glory of God and an increase of His Divine love; and they are the best sort of scholastic contemplatives. Yet, as their chief employment consists in much internal discourse and reasoning, which cannot be practised without various distinct, sensible images, by which God is represented, the knowledge they attain to is not properly contemplative at all. The highest degree of prayer they arrive at is only a perfect kind of meditation.

Mystical contemplation.

Next, there is a contemplation which is mystic. By it the soul without discourse, curious speculations, perceptible use of the internal senses or of sensible images, but by a pure simple, reposeful operation of the mind, in the obscurity of faith, regards God simply as infinite incomprehensible truth, and with the whole bent of the will rests in Him, as her infinite, universal, incomprehensible good. This is true contemplation indeed; and as rest is the end of motion, so this is the end of all other exercises internal or external. It is for this end that the soul inquires by prolonged discourse, and tends by much exercise of the affections to a worthy object, that she may come to the

quiet contemplation of it, and if deserving of affection, may repose in it with contentment.

So with prayer. The soul aspiring to perfect union with God begins with inquiry by meditation; for, as St. Augustine says, 'All good proceeds from the understanding as its first principle.' By meditation the soul labours to represent this Divine object with all the sensible advantages and motives of admiration and love that it can invent, in order that the will by pure love may rest in Him. The will, however, not being yet free, is forced with some violence to untwine and withdraw itself from creatures, so as to elevate itself and get firmly fixed to her only good. The force required for this diminishes by custom and practice, till at length the object begins to appear in its own perfect light, and the affections flow freely towards it, yet with wonderful stillness. Such souls are said to have arrived at perfect mystic union or contemplation.

This is properly the exercise of Angels, for this knowledge is acquired not by discourse, but by intuition. By one simple intuition all objects are represented to their view at once, with their nature, qualities, relations, and effects. But man, who receives all his knowledge through the senses, can only by effects and outward appearances, with the labour of reasoning, acquire an imperfect knowledge of the nature of objects. His reasoning ended, he can then contemplate all that is known to him in the object.

Now, according to Holy Scripture, our chief happiness and perfection will consist in this, that we shall be like the Angels both in our knowledge and in our love; for we shall not see God by created forms and representations, but, like them, we shall have a perfect view and contemplation of God as He is. And so beatific and divine will that contemplation be, that for ever it will swallow up and absorb all our affections. In this life our perfection will consist in approaching as near as possible to this angelic contemplation

of God—a contemplation which is without sensible forms, as He is proposed to us by faith. For faith does not properly represent Him to us, but only imprints on our minds certain obscure notions concerning Him, by which we perceive that He is not anything that we can see or imagine, but an inexhaustible ocean of universal Being and Good, infinitely surpassing our comprehension. This Being and Good, whatsoever It is in Itself, we love with the whole extent of our wills, embracing God far beyond the limits of our knowledge of Him. Yet even such a contemplation and love as this, on account of our bodily weakness and many necessities, cannot in this life be without many descents to earth and interruptions.

Contemplation, active and passive.

Mystic union, or contemplation, is of two kinds. It may be active and ordinary. This contemplation is the habitual state of perfect souls, by which they are able at any time to unite themselves actively and actually to God by an efficacious, loving, yet silent, quiet elevation of the spirit. Or, secondly, the contemplation may be passive and extraordinary. This contemplation is not a state, but a grace or favour of God, by which, according to His pleasure, He communicates a glimpse of His majesty to the spirits of His servants in a secret and wonderful manner. It is called passive, not as if the soul did not actively contemplate God, but because she cannot dispose herself for it at her pleasure, nor yet refuse it when God thinks fit to operate thus in her. Passive contemplation is effected by God representing Himself to the soul by a divine particular image, which is not framed by the soul, but is supernaturally infused into her. This grace is seldom, if ever, bestowed on souls, except such as have attained to the state of perfect active union. But we shall speak more fully of passive union and its several kinds presently.

To return to active contemplation. Mystic authors, as Thauler, Harphius, and others, give instructions how active

contemplation is reached. They say that he who would become truly spiritual should make a practice of drawing his external senses inward into his internal, there losing and, as it were, annihilating them. Having done this, he must next draw his internal senses into the superior powers of the soul, and annihilate them also. Then the powers of the intellectual soul must be drawn into their unity, the principle and fountain from which they flow, and in which they are united. Lastly, that unity, which alone is capable of perfect union with God, must be directed and firmly united to God. Then, and then only, does the soul attain to perfect divine contemplation and intellectual union with God. Active mystic union.

Whether such expressions as these will endure the strict test of philosophy, I will not take on myself to determine. It is certain that by frequent exercise of internal prayer of the will, and mortification, the soul's operations become more and more abstracted from sense, and more elevated above the bodily organs and faculties, thus resembling more closely the operations of an Angel or disembodied spirit.

However, in these pure operations it should not be thought that the soul makes no use of the internal senses or sensible images, for the schools hold that this is inconsistent with mortal life. Still, the operations of the soul in this pure degree of prayer are so subtle and internal, and the images used are so pure and immaterial, that spiritual authors, writing from their own experience, are not to be blamed by persons utterly inexperienced in these mystic matters, if they express themselves otherwise than would be admitted by the schools.

To these purely intellectual operations the soul approaches after sufficient exercise of immediate acts of the will. And when these intellectual operations are attained by the exercise of aspirations and blind elevations they grow more and more spiritual and sublime without any limit.

I call these actuations pure intellectual operations, as opposed to imaginative actuations produced by means of gross sensible images, and not because they are in the intellect or understanding. Indeed, these actuations are produced almost wholly by the will, for in aspirations, properly so called, the soul uses the understanding only antecedently, to propose an object, which is simply a general obscure notion of God, such as faith teaches, the main business and care of the soul being to elevate the will and unite it to God thus represented.

Nor is there in this union either time or place, but all is emptiness, as if nothing existed but God and the soul. And so far is the soul from reflecting on her own existence that it seems to her that God and she are not distinct, but one thing only. This is called by some mystic writers the state of nothingness, by others the state of totality, because God is all in all, the container of all things. The prayer proper to this state is described by a holy hermit in Cassian: 'Thus will the mind ascend to that pure simplicity of prayer which is free from images and without the use of words and the senses, but is uttered internally by an inflamed intention of the mind, by an unutterable excess of affection and inconceivable alacrity of spirit. The spirit being withdrawn from all the senses and sensible objects, the prayer is poured forth to God by sighs and groans that cannot be expressed' (Collat. x., c. ii.).

A mistake made by inexperienced persons.

A mistake is sometimes made by inexperienced persons who think that all the exercises and thoughts of contemplatives are actually in heaven; that they hold interior converse with Angels and Saints, tasting the joys of Paradise, or delighting in sublime speculations about the divine mysteries of the Trinity or Incarnation. True, in a passive union God may in a clear, distinct, and wonderful manner represent any of these things by a supernatural species imprinted on the soul. But the proper exercise of active contemplation

consists not in speculation, but in blind upliftings of the will, by which it is engulfed more and more profoundly in God, with no vision or knowledge of Him beyond what is afforded by the obscurity of faith.

The excellence of active contemplation.

This happy state of active contemplation is substantially the most perfect that the soul is capable of in this life. It is almost an entire restoration of the soul, for the time, to the state of primitive innocence, because the soul is freed from all distracting images and affections that would separate her from God.

Inexperienced persons may, and often do, call this a state of idleness and an unprofitable cessation from work, as Martha complained of her sister Mary. But they who have tasted of it know it to be the *business of all businesses*, as St. Bernard calls it. True, they do not without a special and certain inspiration from God interest themselves in external business, nor perhaps employ much of their time and devotions in express prayers for common necessities. But the inexpressible devotions which they do exercise, and which tacitly include the needs of the whole Church, are far more powerful with God than the busy efforts and prayers of ten thousand others. A few such secret and unknown servants of God are the chariots and horsemen, the strength and bulwarks of the kingdoms and churches where they live.

Whether there are several states of it.

Some mystic writers admit several distinct states following active contemplation. Barbanson speaks of the state of the Divine presence in the soul, and after that the state of the manifestation of God to the spirit, and so forth. In all these there are many ascents and descents. Father Benet Canfield, in his last and perfect state of the essential and super-eminent Will of God, speaks of several distinct exercises, as denudation, active and passive annihilation, and so forth. These writers, perhaps, spoke according to their personal experience, and in reference to their peculiar manner of

prayer. I conceive, therefore, that their observations here are not necessarily applicable to all. However, I do not mean to deny that there may be distinct states—as, for example, the great desolation—but it will be to no purpose for us to search closely into them. Those happy souls whom God so highly favours as to bring them to the mount of vision and contemplation, will need no light from any but God to guide them in those hidden divine paths, and the inexperienced will reap but little profit from curious inquiries into them.

I will therefore content myself with describing in a general manner:—(1) The nature of the prayer proper to the state of active contemplation. (2) Next I will speak modestly of passive union and its kinds. (3) Thirdly I will add a few words about the great desolation which usually follows it. (4) I will conclude with a short description of the state of perfection.

CHAPTER XXI

THE PRAYER OF ASPIRATIONS

Aspirations.

THE prayer proper to the state of active contemplation consists in certain purely spiritual operations of the will which longs and thirsts after God and a union with Him in the summit of the spirit, where God properly dwells in the soul.

These perfect operations are called by spiritual writers upliftings, elevations, inward stirrings of the spirit, aspirations, and so forth. In the following pages we shall adhere for the most part to the term 'aspirations,' as the most suitable expression for those operations. For (1) by them the soul in a holy ambition aspires to raise herself out of her inferior nature, and to mount to the summit of the spirit, which is God's throne. (2) The soul being inflamed by them with divine love, breathes forth her ardent affection to God, as the muscles force the lungs to send forth the air which they had inhaled, that they may draw in more air to refresh them. In both there is a quick motion of emptying and filling, of rising and falling; for after every aspiration there is a short descent and then a mounting higher than before. (3) Again, as breathing is an action purely natural, performed without labour or election, so the soul rooted in charity breathes forth aspirations without effort, the aspirations flowing freely from her and, as it were, naturally. (4) Lastly, as the movement made in breathing does not

in the least hinder other movements and operations, so may aspirations be exercised during ordinary employments without prejudice or considerable distraction, unless the business be such as requires very close attention of the mind. If such employments be imposed by necessity or obedience the soul should quit her aspirations. By so doing she will gain as much by her obedience as she would by her prayer.

Examples of aspirations.

Aspirations are short, ardent affections of the soul, by which she expresses a thirst and longing after God, as: 'My God, when shall I love Thee alone? When shall I be united to Thee? Whom have I in heaven or in earth but Thee alone? O that Thou wouldst live and reign alone in my soul! O my God, Thou alone art sufficient for me! Knowest Thou not, O my God, that I love Thee only? Let me be nothing, and be Thou all, O my God. O love! O love! O infinite, universal good! When shall I come and appear before Thy face, O my God? Let me love Thee only, and that is sufficient! When shall I die, that my God alone may live in me?' etc.

Aspirations compared with other acts.

These affections which are used in the prayer of aspirations, so far as their sense and expression are concerned, may be exercised in immediate acts or even meditation. But the manner in which the soul produces them is in many respects different in perfect and imperfect souls. Indeed, aspirations are of quite a different nature from forced acts of the will.

For, in the first place, such fervent affections, tending directly and immediately to God, constitute the entire matter in aspirations. Whereas in immediate acts they are only occasionally introduced; the ordinary matter being acts of resignation, or the doing, or forbearing, something for God.

Next, even in the immediate acts and affections in which no images of creatures are involved, but which regard

God immediately, He is represented by some distinct image or express notion in the mind, as by some attribute, perfection, name, or similitude. But after long practice of internal abstraction, and the abandonment of all representations of God, the soul is able to content herself with a confused idea of Him such as may be apprehended by the general obscure notion of faith. Not that the soul rejects simply and absolutely every kind of image, for that is thought to be inconsistent with the operations of the soul in this mortal life; but she uses no distinct, formal, chosen, particular images. All such images offering themselves are at once rejected by perfect souls, so that if they were to give an account of what they conceive in their minds when they think of God, they would say, 'God is nothing of what I can express or think, but a Being infinitely beyond it, absolutely incomprehensible to any created understanding. He is what He is, and what He Himself alone perfectly knows; such I believe Him to be, and as such I adore and love Him only. I renounce all claim to a distinct knowledge of Him, and content myself with a blind belief in Him.' Though imperfect souls, especially such as are learned, acknowledge that this negative apprehension of God is alone truly correct, yet, because gross images are not chased out of their minds, they cannot in their internal operations constantly act in accordance with their knowledge. An obscure negative object will not suffice ordinarily to move their affections. On the other hand, only the obscure notion of God will move the affections of perfect souls.

Moreover, aspirations in perfect souls are not preceded by discourse, as are acts—at least, virtually. Nor does the will in aspirations intend to use the understanding, for they are sudden upliftings of the will without any previous motive or consideration.

Again, immediate acts are not only produced with deliberation and choice, but ordinarily with some degree of

effort on the part of the will. But aspirations proceed from an interior impulse, indeliberately and, as it were, naturally flowing from the soul. This shows that there is in the interior a secret supernatural directing principle—God's Holy Spirit, Who teaches and moves the soul to breathe forth these aspirations, not only during her set recollections, but almost continually. It must not, however, be inferred that the Holy Spirit is not also the principle of all other good acts and affections of the will, for they are good only in so far as they proceed from this Divine principle. But in these acts of imperfect souls the will must by previous consideration forcibly raise itself up in order to produce them; moreover, inferior nature is much mingled with them. The Holy Spirit, therefore, is not so completely and perfectly their source and origin as He is of aspirations.

Further, when a soul whose usual exercise is immediate acts or meditation is moved by an internal impulse to produce aspirations, they are never so pure and spiritual as in perfect souls, nor will they continue for any considerable time. The invitation or fervour being past, the soul must return to her inferior exercises; or, if she forces herself to continue aspirations, her recollection will become dry, insipid, and without profit.

Lastly, aspirations, when they have become the soul's usual exercise, proceed habitually from a more perfect and pure source, and are consequently far more efficacious and noble than immediate acts. Moreover, as no violence is used in them, they are produced much more frequently, procure more graces and merits, and increase the habit of charity more than forced acts.

How the soul passes from acts to aspirations.

No man can determine how soon souls will be ripe for the sublime prayer of aspirations. No trust can be placed in the instructions, practice, or example of any one: (1) Much depends upon the industry and diligence of souls

in prayer and mortification. (2) Their special temper of mind and disposition will also have effect. (3) Much, again, will depend on their solitude and abstraction. (4) But principally it will depend on the grace and pleasure of God, Who calls souls, some sooner, others later, by ordinary or extraordinary means, to the prayer of aspirations.

Souls pass from acts to aspirations in various ways. Some find their morning recollections suddenly changed from forced acts to aspirations, with increased power to continue in them, while their evening recollection is scarcely altered. Others (and this is more usual) find their acts grow more aspirative, sometimes at the beginning, sometimes in the middle or end of their recollections. Thus, the effort and difficulty in producing acts gradually diminishes, till in progress of time the prayer becomes wholly aspirative.

Souls whose exercise is acts mingled with aspirations sometimes find themselves much distracted at the beginning of their recollection, and have some difficulty in recollecting themselves. But if it should happen that they are called away on some slight business for a time, when they return to their recollection, or even before, they may find themselves much refreshed and able to exercise aspirations with greater facility. Thus experience will teach them that it is needful sometimes to break off their internal prayer for a short space, and when they return to it they will find themselves better disposed for more frequent efficacious aspirations.

Imperfect souls, however, must not apply this advice to themselves. They should not interrupt (or but seldom) their prayer on account of distractions. Let them use a discreet violence with themselves, and by that means drive away or diminish their distractions.

When the exercise has wholly changed into aspirations, there will be no further alteration in the substance of the

exercise, but only in its purity and spirituality, for there is no exercise more sublime than aspirations.

Aspirations during business.

The soul may arrive at a state in which she may constantly breathe forth aspirations, and also sufficiently discharge her obligations. She may work, read, listen to a lesson, say or hear Mass, or communicate, nor is there any irreverence or negligence in doing so. By aspirations more than by any other act the soul enjoys a sublime and perfect union in spirit with God—the end of all exercises and duties. This is the meaning of the saying of mystic writers that in God nothing is neglected. Indeed, some maintain that there are souls so perfect that even in the noise and disorder of a camp they may, without neglect of their duty, lift themselves up to God in aspirations.

The reason why aspirations are less hindered by external business than meditation or immediate acts, is that the understanding is scarcely used at all in aspirations; hence it may attend well enough to other matters. Moreover, as the will abounds and even overflows with divine love, it will not find its affections captivated, and consequently distracted, by such employments.

Varieties of aspirations.

Aspirations are produced and expressed in a variety of ways. Sometimes they are purely mental, being indeliberate, quick elevations or upleapings of the spirit to God, as sparks of fire from burning coal—the expression of the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*. Of these some are more gross or imaginative, and are not difficult to express. Others in perfect souls grow so spiritual and intellectual that the person himself cannot express what passed in his spirit. Indeed, it is nothing but a blind and almost imperceptible uplifting of the will exercised in the summit of the spirit, as happens oftentimes in the great desolation. The growth of aspirations in spirituality and purity is not easily observed, but it is none the less real and certain, as we know that corn grows though we cannot

see it grow. Indeed, it is no great matter if we do not perceive the growth in purity; the examination were better neglected.

Other aspirations are expressed externally with the tongue; sometimes with an intelligible meaning, as *Deus meus et omnia*—a favourite aspiration of St. Francis; or St. Augustine's *Noverim Te, noverim me.* In these the soul sometimes continues a good space, repeating the same again and again; sometimes she varies it, according to the interior impulse of the Holy Spirit. Other aspirations have no sense at all, as those uttered by Brother Massæus, a disciple of St. Francis.

Lastly, to these ways of expressing aspirations may be added that of reciting the Divine Office or other vocal prayers aspiratively—a far greater proof of sublime contemplation than the physical signs referred to above. This was the contemplation of many of the ancient hermits, and is no doubt enjoyed by some in these days. One spiritual writer says of himself that he was accustomed to make two recollections of aspirations daily. At one time he found himself invited to produce aspirations vocally, and so took in hand the recitation of Our Lady's Office, as he could say it without a book. He repeated the Office nine or ten times a day with perfect attention. This mental attention was in effect aspirations, so that for a few days, while the invitation and ability to do it lasted, he used no other internal exercise, finding much profit in it. Then he returned to his ordinary exercise of mental aspirations.

I will conclude this point by giving some of the inestimable benefits which accrue to souls by this sublime exercise. The benefit of aspirations.

First, in regard of the interior senses and sensitive faculties. The dominion which the soul exercises over them is very great, because God now helps, moves, and directs the soul in all her acts. The heart, too, being estranged from the love of creatures and filled with divine

love, distracting thoughts and images of creatures do not press into the mind; or if they enter they pass no further than into the imagination; or, if the understanding sometimes busies itself with them, they scarcely touch the will, which is not to be easily diverted from its pursuit of aspirations and blind upliftings. But in forced acts it is otherwise. Greater effort must be used against such distractions, which are likely not only to occupy the understanding, but more or less to withdraw the will from God.

Secondly, as regards sensible devotion. Though the devil may have influence over meditation and sometimes in immediate affections and acts, seeking to lead souls into extravagances and spiritual gluttony, it is otherwise in the exercise of aspirations. These are so elevated above the imagination and the sensitive nature that the devil has no means of access. If during the sensible devotion which in some souls flows from the spirit into their inferior nature he should endeavour to cast his baits, the humble and perfectly mortified soul will easily turn his malice to her own good and the enemy's confusion.

Next, as concerns the understanding. The understanding in the lower degrees of prayer was painted over with the images of creatures. Even when turned on God it saw Him by an image of its own making. But now the soul loses the remembrance of herself and of all created things: all that she retains of God is the truth that He cannot be seen or comprehended. All creatures being thus removed, and no particular distinct image of God admitted, there remains in the soul and mind a nothing, as it were, a mere emptiness. But this nothing is worth more than all creatures, for it contains all that we can know of God in this life. This nothing is the rich inheritance of perfect souls who perceive clearly that God is nothing of all that can be comprehended by

our senses or understanding. The state of such souls, as regards their knowledge, is justly called the 'cloud of unknowing' and the 'cloud of forgetting' by the author of the sublime treatise of that name. This is the most perfect and angelic knowledge the soul is capable of in this life. The perception of this nothing grows clearer and more comfortable the longer the soul remains under the cloud and darkness where God dwells, for this *darkness is* immediately *under His feet*, as the Psalmist says. The knowledge or perception of this nothing is called by Father Benet Canfield an active annihilation.

Fourthly, with regard to the will. In this exercise the will is so wholly possessed and inflamed by divine love, which intimately penetrates to its very core, that it becomes like fiery, burning steel, shining right through with this fire. It is now a will deiform, and is in a manner deified, for it is so closely united and hidden in the Divine Will, that God may be said to will and do all things in and by it.

Lastly, in regard to the whole person. Until the soul has arrived at this exercise she has not acquired perfect possession of all virtues universally. They are all on a lower plane, and much mixed with natural sensual ends produced by the former exercises. If some virtues seem to be possessed in a higher degree it is because the persons are naturally more disposed to them. But divine love by aspirations being far more perfectly exercised, the very root of all sin, self-love, is destroyed, and purity of intention is practised towards God for Himself alone, and only by His instructions and impulse. The divine love that the soul exercised before was immediately upon herself in relation to God, and not directly and immediately to God Himself; or if to God, it was at least with reflections upon herself. But in aspirations she exercises love to God alone, without reflections. This can be exercised only by souls perfectly mortified, being the highest mystic contemplation

possible in this life. For, as Alphonsus Madriliensis says, the soul is never able to produce a perfect act of love for God till she has a perfect hatred of herself. This is the supreme degree of mortification, and when it has been attained the soul is ripe for a passive union, and perhaps at the very door of it.

The author of the *Cloud*, and also Barbanson, with much reason teach that, after the soul has attained to the degree of exercising love constantly by aspirations, she is not to descend to an inferior exercise in time of difficulty or aridity.* In this respect they differ from Father Benet Canfield and some others, who require some exercise of the Passion in all states of prayer.

* Father Baker appears to cite with approval the author of the *Cloud* and Barbanson, but it may be noted that St. Teresa is of another opinion. She says: 'Observe this point, Sisters, for it is very important. . . . The soul still desires to be wholly employed in love, and would wish to attend to nothing else; but she cannot though she wou'd, because, though the will be not dead, yet the fire which used to inflame her is so nearly extinct that it is necessary for some one to blow it in order that it may diffuse its heat. Would it be proper for the soul, being in this aridity, to stand expecting fire from heaven to consume this sacrifice which she makes of herself to God, as our holy father Elias did? Certainly not. It is not proper for us to expect miracles. Our Lord performs them for the sake of the soul when He pleases; but His Majesty wishes us to consider ourselves so wicked that we do not deserve He should perform them, and in the meantime that we should help ourselves as much as possible. For my part I believe that, however elevated our prayer may be, this is necessary till we die. . . Hence, when the fire is not kindled in the will, nor the presence of God perceived, it is necessary we should seek for it; for this it is which His Majesty desires, as the Spouse did in the Canticles, and that we ask created things, "Who made you?" as St. Augustine did. I find he did so in his *Meditations* or *Confessions*. We must not stand like sheep, spending our time in waiting. . . . Since we understand by what way we can please God—viz., by the way of His commandments and counsels—let us be very careful in observing them, and in meditating on His life and death, and remember how much we are indebted to Him: let the rest come when our Lord shall please.'—*The Interior Castle* (Mans. vi., c. vii.).

CHAPTER XXII

PASSIVE UNIONS PARTLY SENSIBLE

In the preceding chapter we spoke of the exercise of perfect active union, or contemplation. I call it perfect because perfect union is attained only in aspirations, though undoubtedly in every degree of prayer there is a proportionate degree of union between the soul and God. The aspirations may continually increase in degrees of purity, and grow more and more immediate without limit. But however much they increase in purity, the soul can never reach beyond the obscure light which faith affords. This is the most perfect light we can have here, for to see God as He is is reserved for the life to come. Though even the least perfect have the light of faith, they for the most part use and follow their natural light as regards the images and representations of God which they form in their imagination. But in perfect contemplation the light of faith is the only light. Passive unions

Besides an active union with God, there are other unions and contemplations, which are passive and extraordinary, in which God reveals Himself to the soul by a supernatural species impressed on her. In these God is the agent, and the soul is the patient. Not that the soul does not actively contemplate God, but that she cannot procure such favours by any disposition or preparation of her own. When God

is pleased graciously to communicate them He takes the soul into His own hands, and she must see and think only what God wills, so long as He wills, and no longer.

Two kinds of union, sensible and intellectual.

These supernatural graces are (1) sensible, or (2) purely intellectual. The former are not so perfect or so efficacious in producing good dispositions in the soul as the latter. We will speak of sensible unions here, and reserve the purely intellectual union for the following chapter.

Of sensible unions, the least perfect and the least to be relied upon are those which are communicated by God to the outward senses, as apparitions visible to the eye, audible words uttered by Angels, impressions made on the sense of smell by a sweet perfume, or on the palate by a pleasant taste. To these may be added the gift of tears, a warm glow about the heart, and, what appears to be the highest kind of sensible favour, a splendour shining in the face of God's Saints, indicating their purity.

There is another and more sublime kind of sensible graces which God communicates to the internal senses, especially to the imagination, infusing supernatural images into it. In this way God sometimes makes known His will directly or through His Angels. The person so favoured will perceive words spoken in the imagination, or will think that he really sees or hears an Angel or Saint, for the nature of the imagination is such that it can exercise the functions of the outward senses.

Raptures and ecstasies.

The most notable effects of God's action upon the soul through the internal senses are raptures or ecstasies, internal visions, and apparitions. These sometimes go together, sometimes separately.

A rapture or ecstasy is an elevation of the soul caused by God, in which the person is deprived of the use of his outward senses through the soul, in her internal operations, cleaving wholly to supernatural things. The imagination at such times is environed with lights, visions, and so forth.

This is done that the person may know and see what it is God's pleasure to reveal to him for his own or another's good.

It is not my purpose to treat of these matters minutely. They are treated with great exactness by Joannes a Jesu-Maria, a Discalced Carmelite, to whom the reader interested in such details may turn. Here I shall insist only (1) on the way to distinguish true visions, etc., from false, and (2) how the soul should behave with regard to them.

True and false visions distinguished.

Before giving the rules for discerning true visions from false, it would be well to state the principle upon which the rules rest. It is held as certain that the devil cannot immediately act upon the understanding or will, but only indirectly by imprinting images, or disposing the images already in the imagination, or, lastly, by moving the sensitive appetite. Hence, if the lights imprinted on the understanding by raptures, visions, etc., tend to the real good of the soul, as the love of God, humility, and so forth, the soul may prudently and reasonably ascribe the visions to God.

The rules delivered by ancient and modern writers are as follows :

1. When the will is moved without the ordinary precedent action of the understanding or imagination, and at the same instant a certain new light is communicated to the mind, the soul may be confident the vision proceeds from the Holy Spirit.

2. Care should be taken to see if the person is well-disposed, not swayed by curiosity or pride, not subject to melancholy, and so forth ; whether they are invited by such favours to say or do anything contrary to Catholic truth, peace, obedience, honesty, purity, or humility.

3. Divine, spiritual unions, visions, and so forth, are usually of short duration.

4. The apparitions of good spirits usually cause trembling and amazement at the beginning, but soon the soul receives

courage and comfort, is illuminated, inflamed with devotion, and is in great peace. Whereas when the devil appears, however fearful his appearance, the person is not dismayed; the devil leaves the person as he found him.

5. It is ordinarily a mark of a good spirit—(1) when power accompanies his words—as, for instance, on his saying, 'Fear not,' the person presently is restored to peace. (2) When the words are so clear, intelligible, and delightful that the soul notes and remembers the pronunciation of every word and syllable. (3) When the person feels himself obliged to attend to what is said. (4) When the soul understands much more than the words actually signify. (5) When the soul feels an assurance that what is said will surely come to pass. These, says St. Teresa, are signs of a good spirit.

6. Extraordinary outward favours and gifts are much open to suspicion unless it happens to souls long established in holiness, and is revealed after death rather than divulged during their life. The same may be said of characters imprinted on the body, as the name of Jesus, or the marks of our Lord's wounds.

7. When souls, after the practice of long and severe austerities, enjoy much peace and contentment, it is to be feared that the devil may have much influence in the change, especially when the favours seem to savour more of sense than of the Spirit, or if they are ever so little indecent. In such cases the person should persevere in fear and penance, not trusting to his good deeds, but humbly beseeching God to preserve him from illusions.

8. Ecstasies which do not produce considerable profit to the person himself or others deserve to be suspected. When signs of their approach are perceived the person should turn his mind another way.

9. The appearance of objects, however beautiful or heavenly, should not be immediately welcomed, for the

devil has been permitted to take the form even of our Lord Himself. If the person experiences impure motions, or falls into indecent postures, however unwillingly, the apparition should be judged to proceed from an evil principle. Let not the soul be dejected if she was surprised into showing it veneration or affection; the error was only material.

10. It is very suspicious to see one very young in a spiritual course, or that is not of extraordinary purity, fall into raptures, for great mortification with prayer is requisite for the Divine inaction.

11. To be troubled by diabolical apparitions is not a proof of the want of grace or charity if no evil effects follow. On the contrary, it may be reasonably supposed that the soul is strongly helped by God's Holy Spirit, as she overcomes such dangerous temptations.

12. The apparitions cannot proceed from a good spirit if the person obstinately maintains they are from God after they have been condemned by experienced directors, unless the person is able to show convincing proofs, and has a strong assurance from God that they are true. Certainly, obedience is the greatest security against harm in such cases. St. Teresa seriously enjoins it, and practised it under exceptionally trying circumstances. However, spiritual directors should not be rash or judge till they have had long experience of the person and have duly weighed the nature of the revelations discovered to them. They who take upon themselves to judge of these things should themselves be devout, practised in prayer, and in a good state towards God, so that they may receive light to direct others.

Soul's attitude towards supernatural favours.

Next, with regard to the soul's conduct after receiving such favours. Her principal care should be not to entertain a deliberate love for such things; still less should she pray for them. If God sends them she should not talk

about them without necessity, nor love to hear others talk of them. These are signs of undue affection for them.

St. John of the Cross says that when God in an extraordinary manner makes known His will to humble souls—that for instance, they should take in hand some employment which is likely to redound to their glory, or cause them to think that God has chosen them for their worth—He often rather increases than diminishes their repugnance for such things, causing them to desire to be employed in some base office. Thus He dealt with Moses when He sent him to Pharaoh, so also with Jeremiah. But when the devil counterfeits a divine mission it is otherwise. He causes souls to be forward in taking up employments which are esteemed or are pleasing to their nature, and he inspires an aversion from persons who would dissuade them from their undertaking.

The soul by serious consideration should endeavour to acquire a fear and apprehension of such things, saying with St. Peter: '*Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man.*' She will thus secure herself from peril and render herself acceptable to God. Instructions for mortifying a love for such things are to be found in the *Scala Perfectionis*, *Angela de Foligno*, and particularly in the book called *Interior Abnegation*, where the following passage occurs: 'To God it belongs to give rare and excellent gifts; to the soul it belongs to refuse them. It is suitable to the Divine goodness to draw nigh the soul, and the soul's duty is to draw back in humility, like St. Peter. It belongs to God to elevate the soul; her duty is to humble and abase herself. For as our nature in everything and on every occasion desires its own excellence and exaltation, even in things holy and appertaining to God; so our spirit, illuminated by grace, ought incessantly in all things and occasions to seek to be deprived of all excellence (except in essential virtues), and embrace poverty and lowliness even in sacred things.

In a word, she should be no less careful and resolute to overcome herself than her nature is to seek herself. Thus there is a continual contest between God and the humble soul. Those souls especially who are most inclined to embrace these high and agreeable things must necessarily make resistance, not yielding till pure necessity compels them—till God takes from them the power of resistance—and refusing the high grace to which He at the same time continually and powerfully urges and draws them.' We find instructions to the same effect in Avila's *Epistles*.

This was the practice of St. Colette when God offered to reveal certain secrets to her. 'Lord God,' she answered, 'it suffices me to know Thee only, and the sins in which I have offended Thee, and to beg Thy pardon for them.' Most remarkable is the example of Suso. God commanded him to publish to the world the vices and enormities of the Pope, Bishops, Abbots, and every estate as represented to him in the vision of the *Nine Rocks*. But from habitual fear and humility he resisted the command till he was adjured in the name of the Blessed Trinity. Then he submitted, much bewailing his misery, begging humbly that his name might be concealed from the world, and protesting that he loved and desired nothing but God Himself. His resistance was so obstinate that God told him if He had not known that it proceeded from true but mistaken humility He would have presently cast him into hell. If those who are favoured with extraordinary graces would but consider their danger, they would find little occasion to exalt themselves and despise others who are in a lower yet withal far safer way.

When a director is necessary.

To prevent the danger of abusing such favours and graces by self-love or pride, spiritual writers seriously advise persons thus visited by God not to trust to their own judgment, but to submit themselves to the judgment and guidance of others.

Great care must be had to choose a pious, prudent director,

for too many will decide off-hand that it is from God, and will beg the person's intercession for some favour for themselves. Such imprudence in directors will lead souls to think that God loves to treat with them, and they will interpret the things declared to them according to their own fancy. If the matter should turn out otherwise than they expected, they will become dejected and suspicious, and be in great danger of the devil's snares.

If there be any reasonable probability that the visions, etc., are not from God, the confessor should exhort the person to avoid and despise them. Even though on serious examination he should think them to be almost certainly from God, he should still by word and action seek to deter the soul from adhering to them with affection, inclining her to view them with fear and suspicion, or at least to be indifferent about them, and to direct her love to God, Who is above all His gifts and alone worthy of all our love. If the confessor acts thus he will protect the soul from harm and perform a service acceptable to God.

Certainly it is far less dangerous to be too incredulous about visions than to be too ready to believe and admire them. It is better to suspect many true ones than to accept one that is false. Thus, when our Lord appeared to St. Teresa, we do not find that He blamed the Saint for spitting at Him or reproaching Him; nor did He blame the confessor who had directed her to do so. He merely gave her proofs which would convince her confessor that it was no illusion.

St. John of the Cross gives good advice in this matter. He exhorts souls, when they cannot find a prudent, experienced confessor, not to utter a word about such graces, but pass them by as things of no account; and by no means may they put into execution on their own authority what is disclosed to them in such an unusual manner.

Even though the soul should esteem these favours lightly,

and should deem it needless to trouble her director about them; or if, on the other hand, they appear to be so absolutely clear that the person thinks it unnecessary to consult anyone; the same writer says it will nevertheless be necessary to disclose them to her spiritual director.

There are several reasons for this. In the first place, it is the ordinary manner of God's dealing with souls that, by humble submission of themselves, they may receive new light and grace. Besides, it reminds the soul to restrain her affections from such things and establish herself in true nakedness and poverty of spirit. For this reason the confessor should pass over such favours lightly and encourage the soul to esteem and tend to perfect, active contemplation by charity and pure prayer. Moreover, manifestation to a director affords an occasion of overcoming that natural unwillingness which some souls have to disclose their interior. With such souls the confessor should deal gently, not frightening them, lest they should be discouraged from dealing freely with him. By this means the visions or ecstasies may produce the effect God probably intended—to draw souls to a more perfect active union by love. For one perfect act of love of the will is worth more in God's eyes than all the visions and revelations in the world. Unquestionably there are many souls that are never visited by such favours, but are far more advanced in spirit and nearer to God than are some who frequently enjoy such extraordinary favours.

However unimportant may be the matter suggested in these revelations, the soul should not assent to it without advice. Besides, the matter becomes of great importance from the fact of its supernatural origin. The mere intercourse and familiarity with an intellectual spirit is a matter of great consequence. If it is a good spirit, it is likely to be of much profit to the soul; but if the spirit is evil, it will probably do much harm.

When the soul has occasion to consult others about such matters, she should be careful not to lapse into irrelevant details. Alvarez de Paz advises her to disclose briefly, humbly, and clearly, what will suffice to enable her director to judge; and if he views the matter lightly, let her simply hold on her course and proceed with her ordinary devotions.

When the soul may follow her own light.

The fact that some perfect souls follow their own light in these things should not prejudice the advice here given. These instructions are intended for less experienced and less perfect souls, who, as St. Paul expresses it, have not their senses exercised in the discernment of good from evil (in matters of this nature).

In such cases all souls are not obliged to resign their judgment so absolutely to others as utterly to neglect their submission to the Divine internal guide. For the devout soul that walks simply and plainly with God labours diligently to keep her affections free from all created things, aspires to an indifference whether she have extraordinary visitations or not—nay, in humility and fear desires to be without them; such a soul doubtlessly will be so guided and illuminated by God's Holy Spirit that she will know what to do, and when and from whom to take counsel. Let the soul therefore carefully observe her internal director. Such is the advice of St. John of the Cross.

When we compare the advice here given in the case of extraordinary calls and visitations with what was said in the First Book with regard to ordinary, though supernatural, inspirations, we shall see how differently we should act in either case. In ordinary inspirations we are not to seek advice, but to put into execution what is internally suggested to us; but in these extraordinary cases we must act otherwise.

Ecstasies are supernatural.

Thus far with regard to those passive unions or contemplations which God sometimes communicates to souls in a sensible manner, especially in ecstasies, when the use of

the outward senses is suspended, and which are here styled supernatural graces. This suspension of the senses, however, may be produced by purely natural causes. History tells us of some whose minds were so intent on philosophical truths, that the exercise of their outward senses was suspended and an ecstasy ensued. The same may no doubt happen naturally in the contemplation of divine truths. The imagination in such a case being full of spiritual images only, there may very naturally be represented internal conversation with God or His Angels, which to the person may seem to be real. However, an ecstasy arising in this way may justly be termed supernatural, because the contemplation which caused it proceeded from more than ordinary supernatural grace, and the imaginations occurring during the ecstasy are no doubt ordered by the special providence of God.

Besides these, there are many ecstasies and revelations purely supernatural in which God directly, or through His Angels, communicates Divine lights and graces, such as could not flow from purely natural causes. Of these many were communicated to St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, and others. But whether the ecstasies and revelations proceed from one cause or the other, these recommendations will hold good.

CHAPTER XXIII

PASSIVE UNIONS PURELY INTELLECTUAL

Intellectual unions.

HAVING sufficiently treated of sensible union, we must turn to the consideration of the more noble and sublime passive union which I have called intellectual. In this union God or some divine mystery is immediately presented to the understanding without any representation or discourse in the imagination. In sensible unions the contemplations pass from the outward senses to the inward, and thence to the understanding; but this begins in the understanding, and only by reflection descends to the imagination, there making use of some species for the apprehension in a natural manner of the object intellectually discovered to the soul.

The sensible unions, especially such as take place in the internal senses with the suspension of the outward, seldom happen to very perfect souls, and less often to men than to women. The reason is that the suspension of the senses proceeds partly from the infirmity of the soul and its incapacity to attend to the Divine inaction, and partly from the exercise of prayer by strong affections in the sensitive nature. This forces the soul to attend earnestly to divine objects, and thus causes the suspension of the outward senses.

There are some degrees of intellectual passive union to which the soul, by leading a pure, spiritual life, may dispose

herself; she, however, must behave as a humble patient, and not as an agent in the matter.

In these inactions souls often receive internal lights and form resolutions in difficulties concerning themselves or others. Also suggestions are made, strong and clear, about extraordinary matters to be said or done, without any external or imaginative vision, but by certain secret whispers of the Divine Spirit, silently and assuredly enlightening the mind. We have frequent examples of this in the lives of Blessed Angela of Foligno, St. Teresa, and others.

How God is contemplated here.

In intellectual passive unions, the highest and noblest possible in this life, God is contemplated, without perceptible images, by a certain intellectual, supernatural light darted into the soul. In this respect it resembles somewhat the contemplation of the Angels; for, though God is not seen as He is, yet it is clearly seen that He is, and that He is incomprehensible.

Mystic writers call this a passive union rather than contemplation. It is a union far closer and more immediate than the former, a union more of the will than of the understanding, although undoubtedly it diffuses great light into the understanding. Yet, notwithstanding, the contemplation is said to be in darkness, a darkness in which God is clearly seen, because nothing is seen that is not God. Indeed, according to the teaching of mystic writers, this union takes place above both the understanding and the will, in that supreme portion of the spirit which is visible to God alone, and which He alone can inhabit; a portion so pure, noble, and divine, that it has no name proper to it, but is described as the summit of the mind, the fund or centre of the spirit, the essence of the soul, or its virginal portion.

Such passive unions are the reward or free grace bestowed by God on souls that have been extraordinarily faithful and diligent in mortification and internal exercises, rather than

an end to be intended. Even the most pure and perfect souls cannot with all their labour procure them at will.

The benefits of these unions.

This pure contemplation so exceeds the voluntary operations of the soul's faculties that it usually causes a suspension of the senses, external as well as internal. It continues, however, only a short time, as St. Bernard, doubtless speaking from his own experience, observes, for it seldom lasts above a quarter of an hour.

The benefits which result from this union are very great, and regard the understanding, will, and sensitive faculties.

First, as regards the understanding. A Divine light is communicated to the understanding, not, indeed, revealing any new truths, but affording a clear, firm assurance and experimental perception of the truths which are the objects of our faith—an assurance which the soul perceives to be divinely communicated to her.

O happy evidence of the Catholic faith! No thanks to them that believe after such seeing, which brings more conviction than anything we see with our bodily eyes. Surely the knowledge and assurance which the primitive Christians had of the mysteries of our religion came to them by such contemplations communicated to the Apostles, as St. Paul witnesses of himself. They saw, and even felt, the truth of what they preached and delivered to others.

The soul newly awakened from such a union, on reading the Sacred Scriptures or a spiritual book, will penetrate far more profoundly into the truths contained in them, and will feel and taste them far more than ever before. All her previous knowledge will seem mere darkness, a knowledge of the letter only; but now she penetrates to the inward spirit of the writings.

As regards the will and affections.

Next, the change produced in the will and affections by this union is equally wonderful. Indeed, many years spent in mortification or external exercises will not so purify the soul as a few minutes under the Divine inaction. Here

the soul feels perfectly her nothingness and God's totality, and is thereby strangely advanced in humility and divine love. Being so immediately united to God, so illuminated by His light and inflamed with love, all creatures (and herself above all) are as nothing to her. Moreover, there are many defects in the soul so secret and internal that they cannot so much as be discovered save by a passive union. But by this union these defects are removed, and the soul is advanced to a perfection far beyond anything she reached by all her former exercises put together, so that the following aspirations and upliftings of the spirit are far more pure and efficacious than before. Were it not for these good effects on the will, passive unions would be of little profit; for our merit consists in our free acts assisted by Divine grace, and not in operations in which we are simply patients and God the sole agent.

And the internal senses.

Lastly, these unions have the power to subdue the imagination and internal senses to the rule of the superior soul. The internal senses cannot wander to and fro as they list, but are reduced to a happy servitude, so that without violence they are made to attend on the spirit in all its employments. Or, if perchance the imagination should wander, it does not fasten itself with delight on perishing objects, because self-love is in a sort extinguished; at least, the imagination by its wanderings does not hinder or interrupt the operations of the spirit.

Moreover, as paths leading to a city from distant places gradually converge towards one another as they approach the city till they fall into a common highway, so souls that were quite different, and even of contrary dispositions, in the inferior exercises approach to a remarkable resemblance to one another after such supernatural unions. The reason of this may be that Nature and its affections and inclinations are so worn and even burnt out by the fire of divine

love and by grace, that the Spirit of God is the only principle of all the actions of such souls; hence the resemblance.

It is not surprising if these strange things appear incredible to persons who are strangers to the Catholic faith, and to Catholics, too, who are inexperienced in internal ways. But if they would consider that these things are delivered on the testimony of devout, humble, prudent, and in some cases learned persons, who profess to write only what they have experienced, and at the express command of God's Spirit for the edification of others, they would judge more warily, perhaps, of these things. Moreover, as these graces and communications are never heard of outside the Catholic Church, if the fact does not lead these persons to fit themselves to receive such graces, it may at least cause the persons to abhor all novelties in doctrine and abide unshaken obedient children of the Church.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE GREAT DESOLATION

The great desolation.

THE soul, having experienced such Divine favours, will be inclined to say with the Psalmist: '*I shall never be moved. Thou, Lord, of Thy goodness has made my hill so strong.*' But if she think so she will find herself much mistaken. The whole course of a spiritual life consists of perpetual changes, of risings and fallings; and consolations are usually followed by a period of desolation. Thus this eminent and comforting visitation is usually succeeded by a terrible desolation, a desolation insupportable to souls unprepared for it; so that many, losing heart, turn aside from internal ways, and forfeit all the benefit they derived from their former exercises and divine passive unions.

Such a result is so deplorable that I conceive it best to give a brief description of the great desolation and the purpose for which God permits it, or, rather, leads souls into it. It will encourage them to bear themselves with patience, resignation, and tranquillity of mind during that afflicting time.

From the sublime communications and familiarities of the passive union, God usually conducts (especially after the first passive union) His chosen souls into a state of pure suffering; not a happy suffering as formerly from God, but a woeful suffering from the soul herself. God seems, as it were, to retire from her and permit her to feel her

natural infirmity. This He does by degrees, for if the bitterness of this state seized upon her suddenly, she would be utterly oppressed by the temptation. When, therefore, by many lesser trials of her patience and resignation He sees her strong and resolved to follow Him whithersoever He shall lead her, He puts her to this last and severest trial.

Description of the desolation.

In this state God withdraws all observable infusion of light and grace, deprives the soul of the power to exercise any perceptible operations of her superior spirit, and of all consoling reflections upon His love, plunging her into the depth of her inferior powers. Her former calmness of passions is gone, nor can she introvert herself. She is so assaulted by sinful motions and suggestions, that she finds as much difficulty in overcoming them as at the beginning of her spiritual course. The feeling of all this is intolerable to her; she begins to suspect that she has committed some unknown sin which has brought this upon her, or at least that her resistance to temptation is so feeble that she deserves to be cast off by God. Her corrupt inclinations are so strong that she thinks she is nothing but nature; its rebelliousness and rage against God is inexpressible; she seems more full of the images of vanities than ever before, and has less power to expel them than when she lived in the world. If she would lift up her spirit, she sees nothing but clouds and darkness; she looks for God, and cannot find the least trace of His presence; something within her hinders her from executing sinful suggestions, but what it is she knows not; to her thinking she has no spirit; and, indeed, she is in a region most distant from the spirit and spiritual operations, at least such as are perceptible. Her prayer and recollections are grievous to her, because infinitely difficult; difficult, because sense and nature are almost alone active. Her recollections are tasteless, and seem to her utterly inefficacious, so that

she often thinks it would be better if she were quite extroverted; yet for all that she dares not altogether abandon her efforts to practise recollections, but knows not why.

If these disorders continued only for a short time she might, without great difficulty, practise patience as in her former aridities. But, alas! this martyrdom continues for months—nay, for years in some cases—with occasional alleviations, so that the soul almost loses patience. She complains to God for deserting her who would fain not desert Him; yet when she so prays her spirit seems to hold aloof. If she had only to suffer it might be borne; but she knows it is her duty to work and raise herself up by prayer, and this she cannot do. She now stands in need of as gross operations to cause introversion as ever, and yet they seem less effectual than in her former imperfect state.

Moreover, her temptations are so unexpected, secret, and subtle, that notwithstanding anything she has read about the suffering and nature of this state, she can scarcely believe it can possibly conduce to her good. All her light and instructions will scarcely afford her any relief. As she loses none of her former light, she has no need to seek how to exercise herself interiorly, just as he who can see and hear has no need to study how to use his senses; but when she has to act according to this light she has no satisfaction at all. If she has any difficulty, it is how to act in external matters, but even here the obscurity is very slight. However, the light seems to her to be of little use, for she works as if she had no light. In a word, she now sees her own natural misery so perfectly and exclusively, that she cannot see how God can comfort her if He would.

All this shows that, notwithstanding her exercises and the Divine inaction, many dregs of corrupt nature remain in her. They were hid, not extinguished. This was the only expedient left to destroy in a measure her sinful inclinations.

To natural reason this seems a strange way—to destroy the natural man by suspending the influences of grace, by suffering nature to break forth without restraint, by extinguishing sensible light in the understanding and fervour in the will. But God produces light out of darkness, and strength in infirmity.

How the soul should behave in the desolation.

The truth is that in this state the soul, by her free will, or, rather, in the centre of the spirit beyond the ken of her faculties, remains in constant union with God, although the union is not apparent to her. Although to herself she may seem to be estranged or averted from God, yet by a secret and firm election she adheres to God as her only good. And this sufficiently appears by her carriage: she breaks not forth into murmurings; she seeks no comfort by inordinate external solaces; nor does she do anything to rid herself of her affliction, otherwise than God would have her to do. She practises tranquillity of mind amid a tempest of passions; she exercises resignation without the least satisfaction; she learns patience amid impatience; resignation in the midst of irresignation. In a word, she yields herself a prey to Almighty God to be cast into this purgatory of love, an immediate disposition to an established state of perfection.

The benefits of this state.

The benefits of this state endured with patience and tranquillity of mind are wonderful. The devout soul obtains a new light to penetrate the mystery of the desolation of our Lord in the Garden and on the Cross, a light which inflames her love for Him. Now she realizes why He shrank from the bitter cup; she wonders not that it wrought such strange effects in Him, or that He cried out, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' By this desolation, which lasted till His death, does she hope to be delivered from her desolation. Again, she learns by experience to distinguish between the supreme portion of the spirit and her inferior nature; between the summit of

the spirit and its faculties. That portion which clings to God seems to be a distinct person from herself that suffers, complains, desires; for while she chooses God, her will, she fears, chooses and consents to sin. She is mightily supported by God, yet she thinks Him estranged and separated from her. Thus at last she learns that she can operate without the perceptible use of her faculties. Besides, she learns perfect detachment from even the highest gifts and graces of God, and is content to be deprived of the greatest blessings God can bestow, except Himself. Moreover, the discovery of the weakness and perversity of her nature left to itself, without the sensible influences of grace upon the inferior faculties, produces a profound humility and hatred of self. Lastly, by this sharp purgatory of love she acquires perfect confidence in God's unchangeable love for her, a confidence not to be shaken by any subsequent affliction: she also attains tranquillity of mind. What, then, has a soul to fear that can with a peaceful mind support, and even profit by, the absence of God Himself?

CHAPTER XXV

STATE OF PERFECTION

The end to which all tends.

THERE only remains to say something about the end of the exercises of mortification and prayer, in which there are so many degrees and changes.

Surely that end must indeed be exalted for the attainment of which such incredible labours, internal and external, must be undertaken, and for which such wonderful graces and visitations are required as instruments. Suso, writing from his own experience of a passive union, says that though this contemplation lasted but a moment, as it were, it so filled his heart with joy that he wondered it did not cleave asunder. But when subsequently he was visited by desolation, the heart became so replenished with bitterness that it seemed as if all the balm of Gilead would not suffice to assuage it.

And for what end? Not surely to rest in the joy of such fruition, nor to be tortured by a bitter desolation? No, our supreme happiness is not to receive, not to suffer, but to love. Then favours and sufferings end in this—the full accomplishment of love in our souls, so that our perfection consists in a state of love with an entire conformity to the Divine will.

In what the state of perfection consists.

In the spiritual life, then, the soul does not aspire to wonders or novelties. Divine love is all; the soul begins with love and resignation, and there it likewise ends. The

difference lies in the degrees and lustre of her love. Even imperfect love is divinely beautiful, and its beauty is wonderfully increased by exercise. But when, by fiery trials and a near approach to the fountain of beauty and light in passive unions, love is exalted to perfection, how new, how wonderful, how incomprehensible to us imperfect souls is its exercise! We must be content to hear those speak who have experience in it, and if what they say is incomprehensible to us, it is not to be wondered at.

What Suso writes in his *Ninth Rock* of the nature of this love in general is not so abstruse. 'Oh how small,' says he, 'is the number of perfect souls! Yet few as they are, God sets them as pillars to support His Church, so that were it not for them the Church would be in danger of decay. The prayer of one such soul is more efficacious than that of all Christians besides. They approach very near to God, their fountain, yet they esteem themselves so vile that they can scarcely believe it. Sometimes a certain brightness or glimpse of their First Principle is communicated to them, from which they infer there is some other thing within them from whence these splendours issue. But they are so purely, simply, nakedly resigned to God in Catholic belief, that when they receive any consolations from Him, they are more apprehensive than when they are without them, for their desire is merely to imitate the example of our Lord in simple faith. They adhere so purely and wholly to the Catholic faith, that they have no desire to know anything else. They are so profoundly humble that they do not think themselves worthy of any of those secret comforting graces of God, and therefore they dare not ask for them; they desire no other thing but that God may be perfectly glorified. They are so absolutely resigned to God's will that whatever befalls them or other creatures is acceptable to them. Hence, if God gives them anything they are content with it; if He deprives them of it they are as well

pleased. They challenge nothing, they appropriate nothing; yet if it were left to them they would prefer bitter things to sweet, for the Cross is their sovereign delight. They fear neither life nor death, purgatory nor hell, for all servile fear is utterly extinguished in them; their only fear is that they do not imitate the example of our Lord as they ought and desire to do. Their humility is such that they despise themselves and all the works they ever did; nay, they place themselves beneath all creatures, not daring to compare themselves with anyone. They love all men alike in God, and everyone that loves God they love also. They are dead to the world and it to them, and all the intellectual exercises and operations which formerly they pursued for self are altogether dead in them. They seek not themselves, nor their own honour or profit in time or eternity; they are utterly dead to themselves and all creatures for time and eternity; they live in a certain learned ignorance, not desiring to know anything. They resent no temptations nor afflictions; it is their joy to follow our Lord, bearing His Cross; to their last gasp they desire to walk thus, and though they are unknown to the world, the world is well known to them. These are truly men indeed; true adorers of God, that adore Him in spirit and in truth.'

The soul's operations in this state.

As for the internal actuations of perfect souls, they are so subtle and pure that experience itself is scarcely sufficient to enable them to render an intelligible account of them. Who, for instance, can imagine what degree of divine love St. Romuald attained, after nearly a hundred years spent in solitude, his exercise of love ever growing more and more pure and divine?

In the active unions which belong to a less perfect state, God is in the soul as an object distinct from her, and is so contemplated by her. But in the state of perfection He is not only the object and end, but also the only perceptible

principle of all her operations. As Barbanson says in chapter xii. : 'He is the fund, the entire state, the stable foundation of the soul, by which the being, life, and breath of the spirit become as much exalted as its operations and contemplations. For this union is now not merely a gift and operation of God, for that is of short continuance; nor simple actual infusions, by which the soul may be actually informed, and no more. But in this state the very foundation and disposition of the soul is changed, reversed, reformed by Divine grace. For this grace is a participation of the Divine Being, and consequently makes us partakers of the Divine nature, and confers a stable and permanent state as regards the inward man, by which we may live according to the Divine and supernatural life. Hence result light, knowledge, experience, and an inclination to Divine things.' Elsewhere the author says: 'Although the Divine, actual, special touches are not always really present or felt, so as to produce actual operations, yet the soul can maintain herself and even perceive that she persists in a state of life according to the Spirit of God; a life of peace, security, and repose, in which the spirit is continually attentive to what God will vouchsafe to speak to her.'

Of the union of nothing with nothing.

On account of this indwelling of the Holy Spirit and His absolute dominion over perfect souls, who have wholly neglected, forgotten, and lost themselves, that God, Whom they contemplate in the absolute obscurity of faith, alone may live in them, this state is called by some mystic writers the UNION OF NOTHING WITH NOTHING: that is, the union of the soul, which is nowhere corporally; that has no images of creatures nor affections for them; nay, that has lost the free disposal of her own faculties, operating by a portion of the spirit above all the faculties, and according to the actual touches of the Divine Spirit; and apprehending God with an exclusion of all conceptions and apprehensions. Thus it is that the soul, being nowhere

corporally or sensibly, is everywhere spiritually and immediately united to God, this infinite Nothing.

The soul is now so elevated in spirit that she seems to be all spirit, and, as it were, separated from the body. Here she comes to a feeling of her not-being, and consequently of the not-being of creatures. This is a real truth. Not that creatures have no real being; but that all sinful adhesion to creatures being destroyed, they remain, in relation to the soul, in that true being which they have from God, by their dependence on Him and relation to Him, so that He is all in all.

All sensible operations as ordinarily exercised, and all express, deliberate, intellectual operations take the soul in some direction to some determinate thing. But in this perfect state the soul's desire is to be nowhere; she seeks nothing that either sense or understanding can fix upon. Such souls can taste and comprehend what St. Denis meant in his Instructions to Timothy: 'But thou, O Timothy, relinquish the senses and sensible exercises; abandon all intellectual operations; and with courageous force of mind repress all these things, and according to thy utmost raise thyself in ignorance, renouncing all knowledge, to an union with God above all substance (or being) and knowledge.'

Angelic love of perfect souls.

But these are secrets of divine love which can in no sort be understood except by experience. Blessed are those that thus lose themselves to find themselves! This loss is so infinitely profitable that it is cheaply bought with all the anguish of mortification, the labours of meditation, the aridities, obscurities, and desolations attending the prayer of the will. This loss is the purpose of these exercises and labours, the fruit of all Divine inactions. We mortify our passions that we may lose them; we exercise discursive prayer by sensible images that we may lose the use of images and discourse; we work immediately with the will that we may arrive at a state of stability in prayer above the

direct exercise of the soul's faculties. It is a state in which the soul, brought often to the utmost limit of her powers, is forced to cease from working, that God may operate in her; so that till a soul is reduced to a perfect denudation of spirit, deprived of all things, God does not enjoy a secure and perfect possession of it.

Conclusion.

Thus, by God's assistance, we have seen the various degrees and steps by which the interior life is measured. We have endeavoured (it is to be hoped not altogether unprofitably) to declare with simplicity and clearness their order and changes. If God, by means of our prayers, gives us grace and courage to proceed *de virtute in virtutem* according to these steps and instructions, without doubt we shall arrive sooner or later at the mountain-top, where God is seen—a mountain, to us who stand below, environed with clouds and darkness, but to them who have their dwelling there, it is peace, and serenity, and light. It is an intellectual heaven where there is no sun nor moon, but God and the Lamb are the light thereof.

The Blessed Spirit of Prayer rest upon us all. Amen. Amen.

PATTERNS OF DEVOUT EXERCISES OF IMMEDIATE ACTS AND AFFECTIONS OF THE WILL

PATTERNS OF DEVOUT EXERCISES* OF IMMEDIATE ACTS AND AFFECTIONS OF THE WILL

THE following exercises on the Life and Passion of our Lord consist of almost every kind of act and affection, as contrition, humiliation, resignation, love, etc. They are placed first because they are a kind of exercise of meditation, and are adapted for souls who are unsuited for meditation as commonly practised. These exercises may be useful also for souls practising the second degree of internal prayer—viz., acts of the will.

ACTS ON THE LIFE AND PASSION OF OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

1. THE INCARNATION.

1. Hail, sweet Jesus! Praise, honour, and glory be to Thee, Who for my sake vouchsafedst to come down from Thy royal seat, and from the bosom of Thy Divine Father, into this vale of tears, and to take flesh by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary;

2. Choose, I beseech Thee, my heart for Thy dwelling-place; adorn it with spiritual gifts, and wholly possess it.

3. O that I were able by profound humility to unite Thee to it, and with ardent affection to receive Thee and retain Thee with me!

4. O that I were so fastened to Thee that I might never depart nor turn away my mind from Thee!

2. THE NATIVITY.

1. Hail, sweet Jesus! Praise, honour, and glory be to Thee, Who vouchsafedstto be born of Thy Virgin Mother, poor and

* These exercises may be had separately.

passible, without pain or detriment to her virginity, in a poor stable ;

2. Whom, being born, she humbly adored.

3. O that it were Thy will to be continually born in me by new fervour of spirit,

4. And that I may be wholly consumed with the fire of Thy love !

5. O that Thou wert the only comfort, desire, and solace of my heart !

6. O that I sought after Thee alone, thought on Thee alone, and loved Thee alone !

3. The Infancy.

1. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Praise, honour, and glory be to Thee. Who, being born in the depth of winter, didst not refuse to be swaddled in poor clothes, and, weeping, to be laid in a manger, and as a little infant to be nourished at Thy Mother's breast.

2. I adore Thee, most dear Redeemer, King of Angels !

3. Hail, Prince of Peace, Light of the Gentiles, and most desired Saviour !

4. Grant, O Lord, that I may always stand in Thy sight, truly humble and poor in spirit.

5. Grant that for Thy Name's sake I may willingly endure all kinds of mortification, and may love nothing in the world besides Thee, nor wish to possess anything but Thee.

6. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Whom, newly born, the legions of Angels honoured with joyful praises, and Whom the shepherds, devoutly seeking and finding, adored with wonder.

7. Grant that I may joyfully, without weariness, persevere in Thy service and praises.

8. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Who wouldst on the eighth day, like other children, be circumcised, and shed Thy Precious Blood ;

9. And for our comfort wouldst be called Jesus, which signifieth Saviour.

10. O that it would please Thee to admit me, circumcised from all bad thoughts, words, and works, into the number of Thy children !

11. Thou, O Lord, art called Jesus — that is to say, a Saviour ; be Thou, therefore, my Saviour, and save me.

12. Hail, sweet Jesus! Whom the Wise Men, devoutly seeking, found by the guidance of a star, and humbly adored,

13. Offering unto Thee gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

14. Grant, O Lord, that with these blessed men I may always seek and adore Thee in spirit and in truth.

15. Grant that I may offer daily unto Thee the gold of charity, the frankincense of devotion, and the myrrh of perfect mortification.

16. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who for our sake wouldst be subject to the law, and, to give us an example of humility, wouldst be carried to the temple by Thy Blessed Mother, and be redeemed with an offering ordained for such as were poor;

17. Where Simeon and Anna the prophetess, rejoicing greatly at Thy presence, gave testimony of Thy dignity.

18. O that all pride were utterly extinguished in me!

19. O that all desire of human favour and heat of self-love were cooled and cured in me!

20. Hail, sweet Jesus! Praise, honour, and glory be to Thee, Who, staying in the temple, wast for three days sought with grief by Thy Mother, and at length with great joy found by her sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and proposing questions to them:

21. Would to God Thou wouldst so communicate Thyself to me, that I might never be separated from Thee, nor ever be deprived of Thy comfort!

4. The Hidden Life.

1. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who, for thirty years remaining unknown, vouchsafedst to be reputed the son of Joseph the carpenter and of his wife, the Blessed Virgin Mary;

2. Let Thy grace, I beseech Thee, utterly root out of my soul all pride and ambition.

3. O that I may delight to be unknown, and to be esteemed vile and base!

4. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who didst not disdain to come to the River Jordan, and to be baptized by Thy servant John the Baptist;

5. I would that through Thy merits I might become clean and pure, even in this life.

6. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who, for our sakes abiding amongst wild beasts in the desert, and fasting forty days and nights, and persevering in prayer, permitted Thyself to be tempted by Satan;

7. And, overcoming him, was honoured with the ministry of Angels;

8. Give me grace that I may chastise and subdue my flesh, with all its vicious affections.

9. Give me grace that I may constantly persevere in prayer and other spiritual exercises.

10. Let no temptations, I beseech Thee, defile me, but rather let them purify me and unite me to Thee.

5. The Public Life.

1. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who, to gather together the dispersed children of God, vouchsafedst to preach penance, to call disciples, and from them to choose twelve Apostles to be eminent preachers of Thy faith.

2. Draw me after Thee, and powerfully stir up my heart to love Thee.

3. Grant that I may adhere to Thee alone. Amen.

4. Hail, sweet Jesus! Praise, honour, and glory be to Thee, Who for me didst suffer many afflictions, heat, cold, hunger, thirst, labours, and miseries.

5. Grant that I may receive from Thy hands cheerfully all kinds of adversity.

6. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who, thirsting for the conversion of souls, didst pass whole nights in prayer,

7. Wast wearied with travelling, and didst pass from country to country, from city to city, from town to town, from village to village.

8. Let Thy love make me quick and ready for all good things, that I may never be slothful in Thy service.

9. Grant that I may ever have zeal for Thy honour, and employ myself wholly in Thy service.

10. Hail, sweet Jesus! Praise, honour, and glory be to Thee, Who, conversing with men, vouchsafedst to comfort them, and by many miracles mercifully to cure their maladies and diseases.

11. Give me a heart full of compassion and affection, whereby I may pity other men's afflictions, and may feel for their miseries as if they were my own ;

12. Whereby also I may bear patiently with all men's imperfections, and to the best of my ability succour them in their needs.

13. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Praise, honour, and glory be to Thee, Who didst not shun the company of publicans and sinners, but didst afford Thy loving familiarity and ready pardon to Matthew, Zaccheus, Mary Magdalen, to the woman taken in adultery, and to the rest that were repentant.

14. Grant that I may embrace all men with cheerful love and charity ;

15. May readily forgive those who offend me ;

16. May perfectly love those who hate me.

17. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Who for my soul's sake suffered injuries, blasphemies, reproaches, and abuse from those on whom Thou didst bestow many benefits.

18. Give me a heart truly innocent and simple, that I may sincerely love my enemies and pity them,

19. And, rendering good for evil, may, through charity and patience, perfectly please Thee. Amen.

20. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Praise, honour be to Thee, Who, coming to Jerusalem, didst meekly ride upon an ass, and amidst praises sung by the people who came to meet Thee didst pour forth tears, bewailing the ruin of the city and destruction of those ungrateful souls.

21. O that I might never be delighted with the praises and favours of men ;

22. But always be profitably employed in internal tears of compunction and devotion !

23. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Whom Judas, the treacherous disciple, sold for a little money to the Jews who persecuted Thee and conspired to bring about Thy death.

24. Root out of my heart all evil desires or transitory things.

25. Grant that I may never prefer anything to Thee.

26. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Praise, honour, and glory be to Thee, Who in Jerusalem, according to the law, didst eat the Paschal lamb with Thy disciples, and giving them an example

of humility and charity, kneeling upon the ground, didst wash their feet, and wipe them with a towel :

27. Would to God this example might pierce my heart, and utterly throw down in me all pride and haughtiness !

28. Give, O Lord, a profound humility, by which I may without difficulty cast myself at all men's feet.

29. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Who with unspeakable charity didst institute the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and with wonderful liberality didst give Thyself to us ;

30. Kindle in the interior of my soul a vehement thirst for this most venerable Sacrament ;

31. Grant that when I come to this table of life I may with affection, humility, and purity of heart receive Thee.

6. The Passion.

1. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Who immediately before Thy Passion didst begin to fear, to grieve, and be sad, taking upon Thee our weakness,

2. That by this Thy infirmity Thou mayest comfort and strengthen those that tremble at the expectation of death.

3. Preserve me, I beseech Thee, as well from vicious sadness as from foolish joy.

4. Grant that all the grief I have hitherto borne may redound to Thy glory and the remission of my sins.

5. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Who, falling upon the ground, prayedst unto Thy Father, and humbly offeredst Thyself wholly to Him, saying, 'Father, Thy will be done';

6. Grant that in all necessities and tribulations I may have recourse unto Thee by prayer ;

7. That I may resign myself wholly to Thy will ;

8. That I may with a quiet mind receive all things as from Thy hands.

9. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Praise, honour, and glory be to Thee, Who, being in an agony, didst pray a long time ;

10. And being Creator of heaven and earth, the King of kings and Lord of Angels, didst not disdain to be comforted by an Angel ;

11. Grant that in all adversity and desolation, in all tribulation and affliction, I may seek comfort from Thee alone,

12. And that I may find help at Thy hands.

13. O that I could in all events wholly rely on Thee,

14. And leave myself wholly to Thy fatherly care!

15. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who by reason of the greatness of Thy grief wast moistened all over with a bloody sweat:

16. O that every part of my interior man would exude holy tears of contrition!

17. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who of Thy own accord offeredst Thyself to be taken by Judas the traitor, and Thine other enemies thirsting after Thy blood and desiring Thy death;

18. Grant, for the honour of Thy Name, I may not fly from adversities,

19. But may cheerfully go to meet them,

20. And joyfully receive them as precious tokens sent from Thee,

21. And humbly and constantly endure them as long as it shall please Thee.

22. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who didst lovingly kiss the traitor Judas coming deceitfully to Thee,

23. Showing by the calmness of Thy countenance and sweetness of Thy words that Thou didst love him;

24. Grant that I may show myself loving and mild to all my enemies;

25. That I may pardon them from my heart, howsoever they shall offend me;

26. And bear with them and love them as the ministers of Thy Will and promoters of my salvation.

27. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who didst permit Thine enemies to lay their sacrilegious hands upon Thee;

28. And, being cruelly bound by them, didst not take revenge, but meekly endured the reproaches, blasphemies, and injuries wherewith they greeted Thee.

29. O that, being freed from the bonds of vice, I may be fast bound to Thee with the sweet chains of love!

30. O that Thou wouldst bestow upon me the grace of true patience. Amen.

31. Hail, sweet Jesus! Praise, honour, and glory be to Thee, Who didst restore and heal the ear of Malchus, one of Thy persecutors, cut off by Peter, Thy chief disciple;

32. That thus, by rendering good for evil, the riches of Thy mercy and mildness might shine forth to us ;

33. Grant, I beseech Thee, that the desire of revenge may never have place in my heart.

34. Grant that I may bear deep compassion and affection towards all that offend me.

35. Strengthen my weakness, and make steadfast my inconstancy, with the strong support of Thy grace.

36. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Who sufferedst Thyself, bound as a malefactor and thief, to be led by a troop of soldiers unto Annas, and to be presented before him.

37. O unspeakable mildness of my Redeemer !

38. Behold, whilst Thou art taken, and drawn, and haled Thou dost not complain, nor murmur, nor resist :

39. Grant, O Lord, that these examples of Thy virtues may shine in me to my welfare and everlasting glory.

40. Hail, sweet Jesus, King of heaven and earth ! Who, standing humbly, like an outcast, before the proud high-priest, didst receive a cruel blow upon Thy Face from one of his servants ;

41. Suppress, I beseech Thee, in me all motions of anger ; soothe the stings of indignation, and extinguish all desire of revenge ;

42. That, even provoked by injuries, I may not be troubled ;

43. That I may not strive nor make a tumult ;

44. But, suffering all things with a patient mind, I may render good for evil, and ever be ready to favour those who most cross and molest me.

45. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Praise, honour, and glory be to Thee, Who didst suffer Thyself to be shamefully led bound to Caiphas, that Thou mightest restore us to true liberty, freeing us from the bonds of everlasting death ;

46. Grant that in the midst of insults I may give Thee thanks with all my heart,

47. And that by them I may be advanced in Thy love.

48. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Whom Peter, the chief of the Apostles, thrice denied ; and yet Thou most mercifully lookedst upon him, and provokedst him to repentance and tears for his offence.

49. O that it might please Thee in like manner to look upon me with the eye of Thy mercy!

50. That with tears of repentance I may bewail my past sins,

51. And may never afterwards return to them.

52. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who with pleasing countenance and modest look, standing before the priests and elders of the Jews, didst not disdain to be falsely accused and suffer many injuries;

53. Grant that I may never utter anything false or calumniate any man;

54. But may suffer such calumnies as are laid against me with tranquillity of heart;

55. And, referring all difficulties to Thee, with silence I may await Thy grace and comfort.

56. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who, whilst Thou didst make profession of the truth, affirming Thyself to be the Son of God, didst not disdain to be esteemed a blasphemer;

57. Grant that in all places and before all men I may stand to the truth, and in awe of the presence of Thy Divinity and Majesty I may not fear the censures and judgments of men.

58. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who by the wicked Jews wast proclaimed guilty of death, and without cause condemned,

59. That by Thy unjust condemnation Thou mightest deliver us from the guilt of our sins, wherewith we were justly attainted;

60. Grant that I may reject all unjust and rash suspicions;

61. That I may suffer, without bitterness of heart, all such wrongful detractions and judgments as others shall devise against me;

62. And that on all occasions I may retain, by the help of Thy grace, a quiet and untroubled mind.

63. Hail, sweet Jesus! Praise, honour, and glory be to Thee, Who for my sake wast made the scorn of men and the outcast of the people,

64. And didst not turn away Thy sacred Face, which the Angels desire to behold, from the spittle of Thy adversaries;

65. Grant that I may imitate Thy meekness and patience.

66. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who didst vouchsafe to be cruelly buffeted, reproached, and reviled for my sake;

67. Grant, I beseech Thee, that I may never refuse to be despised and to be reputed base and vile,

68. And that, according to Thy permission, I may be content under all kinds of injuries ;

69. That I may receive them, not as from men, but from Thee and of Thy fatherly mercy.

70. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Who didst permit Thyself to be mocked and Thy Face (to behold which is our chief happiness), for Thy derision, to be blindfolded ;

71. Grant that, the veil of ignorance being taken away, I may be endued with the knowledge of Thy will.

72. Imprint in my heart a continual remembrance of Thee.

73. Thou knowest, O Lord, how hard it is for me to suffer, though in ever so small a matter ;

74. Out of Thy mercy, therefore, assist my frailty, that I may not, like a coward, faint at the coming of adversity.

75. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Who didst permit Thyself (being mocked and bound) to be led to the tribunal of Pilate the judge, and contemptuously to be presented before him, Thou Thyself being the Judge of the living and the dead ;

76. Grant that I may be truly subject to my Superiors and all powers over me ordained by Thee ;

77. That I may obey my equals, and love and honour all men.

78. Grant that I may not fear other men's judgments of me, but may receive them with a ready and meek mind. Amen.

79. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who, standing before Pilate, didst humbly hold Thy peace whilst the Jews did wrongfully accuse and calumniate Thee ;

80. Grant, O Lord, that I may never be troubled at other men's slanders against me,

81. But that I may by silence overcome all injuries.

82. Give me the perfect grace of humility, by which I may neither desire to be praised nor refuse to be contemned.

83. Grant that I may imitate Thy innocence and patience ;

84. That I may live well, and be content to be ill-spoken of and despised.

85. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who with loud shouts from the people,

like a heinous malefactor, wast drawn from tribunal to tribunal, from Pilate to Herod, through the midst of the city ;

86. Grant that I may not be dejected by any injuries of my enemies,

87. And that I be not much afraid of contempt,

88. So that, by Thy assistance, I may possess my soul in patience.

89. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Praise, honour, and glory be to Thee, Who, by Thy silence condemning Herod's vain desire, wouldst not without good cause gratify his curiosity by working a miracle, and didst thereby give us a lesson to avoid ostentation in the presence of great men ;

90. Pour into my soul Thy spirit of profound humility ;

91. Mortify and extinguish in me vainglory.

92. Grant that I may not seek to gain the praises of men, but do all purely for Thy honour and glory.

93. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Who didst not disdain to be scoffed at by Herod and his army, and to be clothed in a white garment, like a fool or a madman ;

94. Grant that I may rather choose to be reputed base and abject with Thee than glorious with the world ;

95. That I may esteem it better to suffer disgrace for Thy love than to shine in the vain honour of the world.

96. Grant that, knowing thoroughly my own unworthiness, I may grow base in my own opinion, and despise, reprehend, and bewail myself.

97. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Who, being compared with the notorious thief Barabbas, wast judged more wicked and more worthy of death than he.

98. The murderer is set at liberty, and the impious Jews demand Thy death, Who art the Author of life.

99. Thou art indeed that Living Stone rejected by man, but chosen by God.

100. O that I may prefer nothing before Thee, nor exchange Thee for anything !

101. O that I could esteem all things as filth that I might gain Thee !

102. Grant, O Lord, that the blot of envy may never stain my soul.

103. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who, being stripped naked in the palace and bound to a pillar, didst suffer Thy naked and immaculate flesh to be rent by cruel scourges, that by Thy wounds Thou mightest heal our sores.

104. O amiable Jesus, I make choice of Thee, covered with stripes, for the spouse of my soul,

105. Desiring to be inflamed and burned with the fire of Thy sweet love;

106. Strip from my heart, I beseech Thee, all indecent thoughts;

107. Grant that I may patiently suffer the scourges of Thy fatherly correction. Amen.

108. Hail, sweet Jesus! Praise, honour, and glory be to Thee, upon Whom are heaped unspeakable injuries and contempt;

109. For they clothed Thee, the King of Glory, with a purple garment for Thy greater ignominy;

110. They fastened upon Thy Divine head a crown of thorns;

111. They put into Thy hands a reed for a sceptre, and, kneeling scornfully, saluted Thee, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'

112. Plant, I beseech Thee, in my heart the memory of Thy Passion;

113. Let scorn for Thy sake be my glory, and injuries and affronts my crown.

114. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who didst not refuse for my sake to be beaten with a reed, to be buffeted, to be spit upon, and to be the object of all kinds of derision;

115. I beseech Thee by Thy wounds, by Thy Blood, by Thy disgrace, and by the grief Thou didst suffer for me, to endow my soul with Thy patience and graces,

116. That thou wouldst convert me and all that I have to Thy everlasting praise and glory.

117. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who, being defiled with spittle, torn and disfigured with stripes, and bound, wast brought forth as a spectacle to the people, wearing a crown of thorns and a robe of purple.

118. Grant that with my heart I may tread underfoot and

hold in detestation all ambition, ostentation, worldly pomp and vanity, and all earthly dignity,

119. That by profound humility and contempt of self I may incessantly run towards the glory of Thy heavenly happiness.

120. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who, being declared innocent by Pilate the judge, didst not refuse to hear the furious outcries of the Jews, by which they demanded Thy crucifixion;

121. Grant that I may live innocently, and be not troubled by reason of other men's evil will towards me;

122. Give me the grace that I may neither backbite other men, nor willingly give ear to those who do so,

123. But that I may have a good opinion of others, and bear other men's imperfections with compassion,

124. And love all men for God and in God with a pure, sincere, and cordial affection.

125. Hail, sweet Jesus! Praise, honour, and glory be to Thee, Who didst permit Thyself in the presence of Thy people to be unjustly condemned to the ignominious death of the cross,

126. That Thou mightest free us from the sentence of eternal death;

127. Grant that I may seek Thy honour, and choose rather to be exercised with Thee in adversity than by forsaking Thee to enjoy the comforts of life.

128. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who, with many disgraces and injuries offered to Thee, didst painfully carry Thy cross upon Thy torn shoulders,

129. And, being weary and breathless, didst languish under the burden;

130. Grant that, with fervent devotion, I may embrace the cross of self-abnegation,

131. And with ardent charity imitate the example of Thy virtues,

132. And may humbly follow Thee unto death.

133. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who in that sad journey in which Thou didst go to Thy death didst meekly admonish the women, that they should bewail themselves and their children;

134. Give me acceptable tears of compunction and of love which may melt my heart, and make it pleasing to Thee,

135. That I may love Thee alone and rest in Thee only.

136. Hail, sweet Jesus! Praise, honour, and glory be to Thee, Who, having Thy shoulders bruised with the weight of the cross, didst at length arrive weary at the place of execution,

137. Where wine mingled with gall was offered to Thee to refresh Thy exhausted strength.

138. O that Thou wouldst extinguish in me gluttony and the concupiscence of the flesh,

139. And cause in me a horror of all impure and unlawful delights;

140. That I may eat and drink soberly to the glory of Thy Name;

141. That I may hunger and thirst after Thee alone,

142. And in Thee place my delight and joy!

143. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who didst not disdain to be stripped naked on Calvary in the sight of the people,

144. And to suffer a bitter pain in Thy wounds, renewed by the pulling off of Thy garments;

145. Grant that I may love poverty of spirit, and not be troubled by any earthly want;

146. Grant that by Thy example I may endure any bodily necessities or calamities whatsoever.

147. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who, being naked, didst not refuse to be rudely stretched out upon the cross, and cruelly fastened with nails unto it;

148. In this manner didst Thou suffer Thy hands and feet to be grievously wounded, and all Thy joints to be dislocated:

149. Grant me, O Lord, that with a grateful mind I may consider the unspeakable charity with which of Thy own accord Thou didst stretch forth Thy arms, and offer Thy hands and feet to be pierced;

150. Vouchsafe, O Lord, to enlarge my heart with perfect love of Thee.

151. Pierce it, and fasten it to Thyself with the sweet nail of charity;

152. And all my senses, thoughts, and affections concentrate on Thee alone.

153. Hail, sweet Jesus! Praise, honour, and glory be to Thee, Who didst hang by Thy pierced hands and feet for three

hours upon the wood of the cross, and, shedding in abundance Thy Precious Blood, didst of Thy own accord endure unspeakable torments throughout Thy Body ;

154. Lift up, I pray Thee, upon the wood of Thy cross my miserable soul grovelling on the ground.

155. O health-giving Blood, O reviving Blood !

156. O that Thou wouldst thoroughly cleanse and heal me, washed by Thy Precious Blood !

157. O that Thou wouldst offer Thy Blood to Thy Father as a perfect satisfaction for my iniquities !

158. Grant, I beseech Thee, that my inward man may with ardent affection receive the drops of Thy Precious Blood, and may truly taste and see how sweet is Thy Spirit.

159. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Who wast so good to those who were so wicked, that for the very persons who crucified Thee Thou didst pray unto Thy Father, saying, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do';

160. Give me, I beseech Thee, the grace of meekness and patience, by which I may, according to Thy commandment and example, love my enemies,

161. And do good to those that hate me ;

162. I heartily pray unto Thee for those that hurt and persecute me.

163. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Who wouldst that the title, written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin (as it were the trophy of Thy victory), should be fastened to the cross, that we, beholding it, might courageously fight against our invisible enemies ;

164. Protect me under this title, that I may overcome all temptations and subdue all vices ;

165. That, having by grace conquered them, I may freely praise and glorify Thy holy Name. Amen.

166. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Praise, honour, and glory be to Thee, Whose garments the soldiers divided amongst themselves, but did leave Thy coat, which was without seam (and signified the unity of the Church), undivided ;

167. Pour down into my heart, I beseech Thee, the spirit of peace and union,

168. That I may never through my fault trouble the concord of my brethren ;

169. But that I may always endeavour to heal divisions and pacify troubles.

170. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Who, suffering upon the altar of the cross incomprehensible torments and anguish, wast shamefully reproached by the Jews, who vomited forth blasphemies against Thee ;

171. Grant, O Lord, that, being mindful of Thy humility, patience, and mildness, I may quietly and cheerfully suffer pain, disgrace, persecution, infamy, etc.,

172. And may remain with Thee nailed to the cross even to the end.

173. Let no violence of temptation, no storm of adversity, no tempest of insults, hinder me from accomplishing my good purposes.

174. Let not death, nor life, nor things present nor to come, nor any creature, separate me from Thy love.

175. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Who didst suffer one of the thieves to upbraid Thee, and didst most mercifully promise the glory of Paradise to the other, who humbly acknowledged his injustice, and with devout faith confessed Thee to be his King and God ;

176. Behold me, I beseech Thee, with those eyes of mercy which Thou didst cast upon the repentant thief.

177. O that, by Thy holy grace, I may lead a life so innocent that I may faithfully serve Thee and love Thee !

178. That at the end of my life I may deserve to hear, most merciful Redeemer, that desired voice, 'This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.'

179. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Who from the cross beholding Thy sweet Mother full of grief and tears, with compassion didst commend her to Thy disciple John, and, again, John to her, and us all in John unto Thy Mother ;

180. Grant that I may love and honour her with chaste and ardent affection ;

181. That, having her for my Mother, I may deserve to be acknowledged by her for her son.

182. Grant that in all my necessities, and especially at the hour of death, I may experience her assistance.

183. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Praise, honour, and glory be to

Thee, Who, pitifully hanging upon the cross with gaping wounds, didst declare Thyself to be destitute of all comfort ;

184. Grant that with confidence I may always have recourse to Thee, my merciful Saviour, in all adversities, temptations, and desolations,

185. And, wholly distrusting myself, I may trust in Thee alone,

186. And commit and resign myself entirely to Thee.

187. Wound the core of my soul with the remembrance of Thy wounds ;

188. Imprint them in my heart, and inebriate my spirit with Thy Precious Blood,

189. That I may attend to Thee, and Thee only seek, find, hold, and possess.

190. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Who, panting upon the cross, Thy Body parched for want of blood, becamest thirsty, and didst burn with an unspeakable desire for our salvation ;

191. Grant that I may ardently thirst after Thy honour and the salvation of souls,

192. And may with zeal employ myself in this affair ;

193. Grant that I may not be hindered nor entangled by any transitory thing.

194. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Who wouldst that a sponge dipped in vinegar and gall should be offered Thee, being thirsty even to death, that by taking thereof Thou mightest satisfy for our gluttony, and leave us an example of poverty ;

195. Give me grace to despise unlawful pleasures and avoid excess in meat and drink ;

196. Also to use those things moderately which Thou givest for the sustentation of the body.

197. Pacify my inordinate desires, that whatsoever pleaseth Thee may please me, and whatsoever displeaseth Thee may be displeasing also to me.

198. Hail, sweet Jesus ! enamoured of mankind, Who, performing the work of our redemption, didst offer Thyself upon the altar of the Cross a holy sacrifice for the expiation of the sins of men ;

199. Be Thou, I beseech Thee, the measure of all my thoughts, words, and works

200. That in all things I may, with a right and simple intention, seek Thy honour.

201. Grant that I may never grow cold nor faint in Thy service,

202. But that fervour of spirit may be renewed in me, and that I may be daily more and more inflamed to praise and love Thee. Amen.

203. Hail, sweet Jesus! Praise, honour, and glory be to Thee, Who of Thy own accord didst embrace death, and, commending Thyself to Thy heavenly Father, didst bow down Thy venerable head and yield up Thy Spirit;

204. Thus truly giving Thy life for Thy sheep, Thou hast shown Thyself to be a good shepherd.

205. Thou didst die, O only-begotten Son of God—Thou didst die, O my beloved Saviour, that I might live for ever;

206. O how great hope and confidence have I reposed in Thy Death and Blood!

207. I glorify and praise Thy holy Name, acknowledging my infinite obligations to Thee.

208. O good Jesus, by Thy bitter Death and Passion give me grace and pardon;

209. Give unto the faithful departed rest and life everlasting.

210. Hail, sweet Jesus! at Whose death the sun withdrew his light, the veil of the temple was rent asunder, and the monuments opened;

211. O Sun of Justice, permit not, I beseech Thee, that the beams of Thy grace at any time forsake me,

212. But let them continually enlighten the inmost parts of my soul;

213. Withdraw wholly from me the veil of hypocrisy;

214. Shake my soul with the sorrow of true repentance;

215. Rend my stony heart,

216. That, being wholly renewed, I may contemn all transitory things and love that only which is eternal.

217. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who wouldst that Thy side should be opened with a soldier's lance,

218. And out of it pour blood and water to revive and wash our souls;

219. Thou wouldst, O my Beloved, that Thy sweet Heart should be wounded for me ;

220. O that it might please Thee to make a deep wound in my heart with the lance of Thy love,

221. And unite it to Thy Sacred Heart

222. In such a manner that I may have no power to will anything but what Thou wilt !

223. Bring in, O my Lord, my soul through the wound in Thy side into the bosom of Thy charity and the treasure-house of Thy Divinity,

224. That I may joyfully glorify Thee, my God, crucified and dead for me. Amen.

225. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Praise, honour, and glory be to Thee, Who sufferedst all that the malice of men and devils could devise ;

226. Behold, with all possible devotion I salute Thy five principal wounds.

227. Hail, ruddy, glorious, sweet wounds of my Redeemer and my King !

228. Hail, glorious seals of my reconciliation and salvation !

229. I humbly desire to abide and be hidden in you, and be by that means secure from all evil.

230. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Who, being amid the lamentations of Thy friends taken down from the cross, wouldst be anointed with precious ointments, wrapped in a winding-sheet, and buried where no man was buried before ;

231. Bury, I beseech Thee, all my senses, powers, and affections in Thee,

232. That, being united to Thee by efficacious love, I may become insensible to all other things.

233. Hail, sweet Jesus ! Who hast vanquished the power of the devil, and, powerfully and lovingly descending in soul into hell, didst make joyful by Thy presence the Fathers there detained,

234. And didst translate them thence at Thy glorious ascension to the garden of celestial Paradise and to the clear vision of God ;

235. Let the virtue of Thy Passion and Blood descend now,

I beseech Thee, into Purgatory upon the souls of my parents, kinsfolk, friends, benefactors, and all the faithful departed,

236. That, being delivered from pains, they may be received into the bosom of eternal rest.

7. The Resurrection.

1. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who, like a conqueror with glorious triumph, didst arise out of Thy closed sepulchre,

2. And, revested with Thy lovely countenance, didst fill Thy friends with new joy and gladness;

3. Grant, O Lord, that, leaving the old paths of wicked conversation, I may walk in newness of life,

4. And seek and taste the things which are above, and not the things upon the earth,

5. So that when Thou my Life shalt appear at the last day I may be with Thee in glory.

6. Hail, sweet Jesus! Praise, honour, and glory be to Thee, Who forty days after Thy resurrection didst gloriously ascend into heaven in the sight of Thy disciples, where Thou sittest on the right hand of Thy Father, blessed for ever more:

7. O that my soul might always languish on earth, and ascend and aspire towards heaven!

8. May it hunger and thirst always after Thee!

9. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who didst give Thy Holy Spirit to the disciples, persevering together with one mind in prayer,

10 And didst send them to teach all nations throughout the whole world;

11. Cleanse, I beseech Thee, the interior of my heart;

12. Give me true purity and constancy of mind, that the Holy Ghost may find an agreeable habitation in my soul,

13. And may fill me with the special gifts of His grace;

14. May comfort, strengthen, fill, govern, and possess me.

15. Hail, sweet Jesus! Who, coming as a judge at the last day, wilt render unto everyone according to his deeds either punishment or reward.

16. O my most merciful Lord God, grant that according to Thy will I may pass this miserable life so innocently,

17. That my soul, departing out of the prison of my body, I may be clothed with Thy merits and virtues,

18. And be received into Thy everlasting joy,

19. And with all the Saints I may bless and praise Thee for ever.

20. Hail, sweet Jesus! Whom I have grievously offended all the days of my life;

21. Alas! I have never ceased to be ungrateful unto Thee, resisting Thy grace in divers ways, and always adding new faults to my former;

22. Behold, O my sweet Refuge—behold me, the outcast of all creatures, bringing with me nothing but a burden of sin;

23. I prostrate myself at the feet of Thy mercy, and humbly implore Thy pardon;

24. Forgive, I beseech Thee, and save me, for Thy Name's sake;

25. For I believe and am convinced that no sins are so grievous but may by the merits of Thy sacred Passion be forgiven and washed away. Amen.

EXERCISES OF CONTRITION.

The following exercises of contrition are suitable for souls that are naturally indisposed for discursive prayer, and so are obliged to begin with immediate acts or affections. Such souls at the beginning may make these exercises the entire subject of their recollections, until they find themselves able to proceed to the following exercises of love, etc. These exercises may be useful, also, for souls more advanced who, on account of some sin committed, judge it desirable to stir up contrition for it in their hearts. In this case it will not be necessary to spend the whole recollection in these acts, but merely to take one or two of them, and to employ the remainder of the time in their usual matter of prayer (see Book. III., Chapter XIV.).

The First Exercise.

1. Who will give to mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I may bewail day and night my sins and ingratitude towards God my Creator?

2. Consider, O my soul, the multitude of the benefits which

God hath bestowed upon thee, and be confounded and ashamed of thy wickedness and ingratitude.

3. Consider who thy Creator is, and who thou art; how He hath behaved towards thee, and how thou hast acted towards Him.

4. Thou hast made me, O Lord, when I was not, and that according to Thine own image.

5. Thou, from the very first instant of my being, hast been my God, my Father, my Deliverer, and all my Good.

6. Thou, with the benefits of Thy providence, hast preserved my life even till the present time. O let it be spent in Thy service!

7. Thou hast come down from heaven to seek me in all those ways in which I had lost myself. O draw up my soul unto Thee!

8. By Thy captivity Thou hast loosed my bonds; and by delivering Thyself into the hands of sinners Thou hast delivered me from the power of the devil; and by taking upon Thee the form of a sinner Thou hast destroyed my sins.

The Second Exercise.

1. How many thousand souls now perhaps burn in hell, who have less sinned than I, and yet I burn not there!

2. What had become of me, if Thou hadst taken me away when Thou didst take them?

3. Who then, O Lord, bound the hands of Thy justice? who held the rod of Thy judgments when I by sinning provoked Thee?

4. What pleased Thee in me that Thou didst deal more mercifully with me than with others?

5. My sins cried unto Thee, and Thou didst stop Thine ears. My malice every day increased against Thee, and Thy goodness every day increased towards me.

6. What shall I now render, O Lord, unto Thee, for all these benefits which I have received of Thee? Because Thou hast given me Thyself, what shall I render to Thee?

7. Who, therefore, will give tears to mine eyes, that I may bewail my ingratitude and wicked return for Thy many benefits?

8. Help me, O Lord, and give me grace, that I may worthily bewail mine iniquities.

The Third Exercise.

1. My God, I have used my strength to do Thee injury, and have offended Thee by the works of my hands.

2. The things which Thou hast given and created for me, to be employed in Thy service and honour, I have wrongfully and unthankfully turned to Thy offence and dishonour.

3. My feet have been swift to evil, and my eyes have been wanton to vanity, and mine ears have been open to trifles and idle tales.

4. My understanding, which should have contemplated Thy beauty and have meditated day and night on Thy commandments, hath considered transitory joys and meditated how to transgress Thy commandments.

5. My will was by Thee invited to love celestial delights and delicacies, but I preferred the earth before heaven.

6. Alas! what can I, a wretch, answer, if Thou enterest with me into judgment, and wilt say: 'I have planted thee a chosen vineyard, all true seed; how then, O strange vineyard, art thou turned in My sight into that which is depraved?'

7. I have not only been ungrateful for Thy benefits, but have used Thy benefits themselves as weapons against Thee.

8. Thou hast made creatures for my use to allure me to love Thee: I have abused them, and divers times have made them an occasion of sin. I have made choice rather of the gift than of the Giver.

The Fourth Exercise.

1. But if a strict account shall be demanded for these things which cost Thee so little, what account wilt Thou ask of those which Thou hast bought Thyself with Thy most Precious Blood?

2. My God, how have I perverted all Thy counsels for my salvation!

3. Thou wert made man to make me a partaker of the Divine Nature; I have made myself a beast and the slave of the devil.

4. Thou hast come down to the earth to bring me to heaven; and I have not hearkened to or acknowledged this high vocation, but have persevered in wickedness and in the mire of my baseness.

5. Thou hast made me one body with Thee; and I have joined myself again to the devil.

6. Thou hast humbled Thyself even to the dust of the earth; I puff myself up with pride.

7. Thou wouldst die to kill my sins; and I, presuming on Thy mercy, goodness, and love, have not feared to sin against Thee. What greater impiety can be imagined?

8. I have taken occasion of Thy goodness to work malice; and by the means which Thou hast used to kill sin, I have raised again sin in myself.

The Fifth Exercise.

1. Thus have I made Thy medicines the occasion of sin, and I have turned the sword, which I received of Thee to defend myself from mine enemies, against myself, and with it murdered mine own soul.

2. Thou didst die that they that now live may not live to themselves, but unto Thee.

3. O most patient Lord, Who for sinners hast suffered buffets, but wast far more patient in suffering sinners, will this Thy patience endure for ever towards me? What shall I do, my Lord? I confess I am not worthy to appear in Thy sight, nor to behold Thee. Whither shall I fly from Thy face?

4. What, then, shall I do, but cast myself down at Thy feet, and humbly crave mercy? For art not Thou my Creator, my Preserver, my Redeemer, my Deliverer, my King, my Pastor, my Priest, and my Sacrifice?

5. If Thou repellest me, who will receive me? If Thou rejectest me, of whom shall I seek succour?

6. Behold, I come full of wounds; Thou canst heal me. I come all blind; Thou canst give me sight. I come all dead; Thou canst raise me. I come all full of leprosy; Thou canst make me clean.

7. Thou shalt sprinkle me, O Lord, with hyssop (with Thy Precious Blood shed for me), and I shall be made clean.

8. Thou, O God, Who art able to do all things, convert me unto Thee; renew my spirit, enlighten my understanding, sanctify my will, increase my strength of body and soul, that I may depend on Thee only, fear and love Thee above all things, and serve Thee fervently; and that in all my affections hereafter I may conform myself to Thy Blessed will and pleasure.

The Sixth Exercise.

1. Take pity, O Lord—take pity, O merciful Saviour, on me, a miserable sinner, doing things blameworthy, and justly suffering for them.

2. If I ponder on the evil which I daily commit, that which I endure is nothing in comparison with it.

3. Thou, O Lord our God, art just and full of goodness, neither is there any wickedness in Thee;

4. Because when we offend, Thou dost not unjustly and cruelly afflict us; Who, when we were not, hast powerfully made us; and when for our sins we were worthy of damnation, Thou hast in Thy mercy and goodness set us in the way of salvation.

5. I humbly beseech Thee, O Lord, that Thou wilt not deal with me according to my iniquities, by which I have deserved Thine anger, but according to Thy manifold mercies, which surpass the sins of the whole world.

6. Take pity on me, Thy son, whom Thou hast begotten in the great agony of Thy Passion; and do not so attend to my wickedness that Thou forget Thy goodness.

7. Is it possible for a woman to forget the child of her own womb? And though she should forget, O most loving Father, Thou hast promised not to be unmindful.

8. Truly it is better for me not to be at all, than to be without Thee, sweet Jesus.

The Seventh Exercise.

1. Woe to me at the Day of Judgment, when the books of our consciences shall be opened; when of me it shall be openly proclaimed, 'See here a man and his works!'

2. Alas! what shall I say? I will call and cry unto Thee, O Lord my God; why am I consumed being silent?

3. Weep, O my soul, and make lamentation, as a young married woman for the death of her husband.

4. O anger of the Almighty, rush not upon me, for I cannot subsist against Thee.

5. Take pity upon me, lest I despair of Thy mercy ; that, by despairing of myself, I may find comfort by trusting in Thee.

6. Thou, O Lord, dost not desire the death of sinners, neither dost Thou take pleasure in the perdition of those that die.

7. Nay, rather that those who were dead might live, Thou Thyself hast died ; and Thy death hath been the death that was due to sinners, and they by Thy death have come to life.

8. Let Thy heavenly hand help me, and deliver me from the hands of those that hate me, lest they exult and rejoice over me, saying, 'We have devoured him.'

EXERCISES OF ACTS OF THE WILL.

The First Exercise.

1. My God, Thou art of a most simple being, therefore infinite in all perfections ;

2. I adore Thee with my whole heart, with profound humility and reverence ;

3. And because Thou only art worthy of all love, I do and for ever will, through Thy grace, love Thee with entire and sincere love.

4. Thy being, O my God, is incomprehensibly immense, filling and penetrating all things ;

5. O teach me, therefore, so to live as to be always in Thy presence ;

6. Possess my heart as Thy temple, and reign in it as Thy throne.

7. I offer unto Thee my life and all my faculties and strength, to be employed only in Thy service.

8. O my soul, never cease to bless our infinitely great and bountiful Lord, Whose perfections and happiness shall be eternally contemplated and enjoyed by thee.

The Second Exercise.

1. Great art Thou, O Lord, and great is Thy power; yea, and Thy wisdom is infinite.

2. Send, O God, out of Thy inexhaustible fountain of light one beam into my soul, that I may perfectly see, admire, and adore all Thy most wise and secret judgments.

3. O how ungrateful have I been to my most merciful God, Whose infinite power and wisdom have continually watched over me.

4. Whom need I fear, having a Saviour infinite in power, wisdom, and goodness?

5. Thou, my God, art good, not with this or that kind of goodness, or after such or such a manner; but simple good, without limitation or measure.

6. O my soul, if a small shadow and appearance of good here on earth doth, with such violence, draw our affections, how ought we to love Him by Whom all good is communicated to creatures?

7. My God, if I had in my heart the capacity of loving that is in all men and Angels, it were all due to Thee alone. How much more, then, ought I to employ my little power on Thee?

8. How happy were we, O my soul, if we had no other will but the will of Jesus!

The Third Exercise.

1. My God, Thou art the Author, end, and measure of all purity and holiness, before Whom folly is found even in the Angels.

2. How infinite is Thy goodness, then, since Thou desirest that my heart may become a temple for Thy holiness to dwell in!

3. O that Thy presence would purify my heart from all strange and unworthy affections to creatures!

4. O that I might have converse only with Thee in a holy silence and solitude!

5. O my soul, conceive if thou canst how ugly and abominable sin (which is impurity itself) is in the eyes of our God, Who is purity itself.

6. Thy Divine providence, O my God, stretcheth to all creatures whatsoever; by its law all things arise, fall, move, and rest: even the very hairs of our heads are numbered by Thee.

7. O ungrateful and foolish wretch that I am, how oft have I desired and even endeavoured to withdraw myself from this all-comprehending providence, having a will to live according to mine own most imprudent judgment! My God, I repent of this from the bottom of my heart, and humbly beg Thy pardon.

8. From this hour my purpose, through Thy grace, is to accept and welcome all occurrences, whether pleasing or distasteful to sense, as coming from Thy heavenly providence: this shall be my comfort and stay in all my afflictions and dangers, and will afford perfect rest of mind in expectation of future events.

The Fourth Exercise.

1. Who can declare the mercies of my God towards my soul? Of nothing, He raised me to the dignity of an intellectual, immortal nature; from the low state of nature He exalted me to the divine state of grace; from thence he will raise me to a participation of His glory and happiness.

2. Bless thou our Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, praise His holy Name.

3. And with me let all His holy Angels and Saints sing forth the praises of my God, my most merciful and liberal benefactor.

4. My God, through Thy grace I will consecrate the remainder of my life to glorifying Thy holy Name, directing all the powers of my soul and body to accomplishing Thy holy will and increasing Thy glory and praise.

5. Thy right hand, O my God, is full of righteousness: Thou art a just judge, and with Thee is no acceptation of persons; but Thou renderest to every one according to his works.

6. This Thy justice is as truly acceptable to me as Thy goodness.

7. Be Thou therefore exalted in the punishment of all obstinate, impenitent sinners; for it is just and reasonable that Thou shouldst be feared.

8. But Thy will it is, O my God, that I should appeal from

Thy tribunal of justice to that of mercy, being desirous to amend and correct all my past sins and provocations of Thee.

The Fifth Exercise.

1. My God, as Thou art the author of the being of all things, so art Thou the end also; for Thy glory all things were and are created.

2. And a great proof hereof Thou hast given to us all, for we see that our hearts find no rest whilst we adhere by affection to creatures.

3. Therefore, my God, I here offer myself as a holocaust, to be even consumed to Thy glory.

4. I offer unto Thee my understanding, firmly to adhere to all Divine truths revealed by Thee to Thy Church, renouncing all doubt or questioning of any of them; and my irrevocable purpose is, through Thy grace, to live and die therein.

5. O that it would please Thee that all mankind might know Thee, and with a firm faith confess Thee!

6. My God, I willingly offer unto Thee my blood to seal my faith, whensoever by Thy providence an occasion shall be presented, hoping that then Thou wilt be my strength and my salvation, and being assured that, whilst I hope in Thee, I shall not be overcome.

7. O my God, that Thou wouldst wholly possess my mind, which is Thine, and which I here offer to Thee! Fill it with thoughts of Thee only; expel out of my memory all vain objects.

8. I offer unto Thee, O my God, my will and affections, to will, love, and desire only that which Thou willest and lovest.

The Sixth Exercise.

1. My God, in union with that perfect and acceptable oblation of Thy Son my Saviour Jesus Christ, I offer unto Thee my whole self, and all that belongs unto me, to be employed only in Thy service and worship.

2. Let His worthiness recompense for my unworthiness, that I may obtain that by His merits which I cannot by my own.

3. I offer unto Thee my watchings and my sleep, in union with His waking from the sleep of death.

4. I offer unto Thee all my thoughts, words, and actions, to be sanctified and purified to Thy glory by His most holy thoughts, words, and actions.

5. I offer unto Thee my refections, in union with that Blessed Supper in which He gave His Precious Body and Blood to nourish the souls of His disciples.

6. I offer unto Thee the prayers and other excercises of piety which, through Thy grace, I have or shall perform, beseeching Thee to accept them in union with those perfect merits and heavenly prayers which Thy Son offered to Thee on Mount Olivet or elsewhere.

7. My God, I offer unto Thee the afflictions, pains, desolations, and tribulations which I either have or ever shall suffer in union with the bitter Passion of Thy only-begotten Son, my only Saviour.

8. O most sweet and merciful Jesus, as Thou in infinite goodness didst offer Thyself unto Thy Father for the expiation of my sins, and to purchase for me an inheritance of glory, behold, I here offer my whole self to Thee, to be employed purely to Thy glory.

The Seventh Exercise.

1. My God and all my good, I am nothing, I have nothing, I can do nothing good of myself; Thou art all, and our sufficiency is from Thee only.

2. I here humbly prostrate my soul before Thee, plunging myself into the abyss of my own nothing.

3. How infinitely good art Thou, O my God, that vouchsafest to behold and take care of so vile, so unclean a creature as I am!

4. I beseech Thee that for this undeserved goodness of Thine I may still more humble myself before Thee and all others.

5. I am content that my inexpressible vileness were known unto all, so that all may treat me according to my demerits, out of a just zeal for Thy glory.

6. O my God, the God of love, I would to God that, as I live only in Thee and by Thee, so likewise may I live for Thy honour and service.

7. My God, even because I am indeed nothing, and Thou alone art all, therefore will I wholly distrust and renounce myself and trust in Thee only, Who alone art able to supply my wants and cure my defects.

8. To Thee, O Lord Jesus, is this poor and wretched soul of mine committed by Thy Heavenly Father; behold, I cast all my care and solicitude upon Thee, both for this life and that which is to come.

EXERCISES OF RESIGNATION.

The following acts of resignation may be practised according to the directions given in Book III., Chapter XV., p. 320 :

Acts of Resignation in General.

1. My God, whatsoever I have or can do Thou hast freely bestowed upon me. Behold, I offer myself and all that belongs to me to Thy heavenly will.

2. Receive, O Lord, my entire will and liberty ; possess my understanding, memory, and affections; only vouchsafe to bestow upon me Thy love, and I shall be rich enough ; nothing more do I desire ; Thou alone, O my God, sufficest for me.

3. O my God and all my good, I consecrate to Thy love and honour both my body and soul. Preserve them as it shall please Thee, and employ them according to Thy will in Thy service.

4. My Lord, I prostrate myself before Thee, to do Thee homage for what I am and may be by Thy grace.

5. My God, I beseech Thee to glorify Thyself by me according to whatsoever manner Thou shalt please.

6. My God, henceforth I will never search any object of my affections out of Thee, since I see that all good is to be found in Thee.

7. O most desirable goodness of my God, let it be to me even as Thou wilt.

8. O eternal, most holy, and adorable Will of my Saviour, do Thou reign in and over all my wishes and desires from this moment for ever.

9. My God and all my good, for that infinite love of Thine

own self, grant that, as I live in and by Thee, so may I live only to and for Thee.

10. O my soul, let us live to Him, and for Him only, that died for us.

Mixed Acts of Resignation.

Section 1. *O how good art Thou, O my God, to those that trust in Thee, to the soul that truly seeks Thee! What art Thou, then, to those that find Thee!*

1. Whatsoever I shall suffer, O my God, by Thy ordinance, either in body or soul, and how long soever I shall suffer, I renounce all consolation but what comes from Thee.

2. My God, though Thou shouldst always hide Thy face from me, and never afford me consolation, yet will I never cease to love Thee, praise Thee, and pray unto Thee.

3. For Thy sake I renounce all pleasure in eating and drinking, being resolved to make use of Thy creatures only in obedience to Thy will, and to be enabled thereby to serve Thee.

4. I resign myself to abide all my life among strangers; yea, or among such as have an aversion to me, and who will never cease to molest me.

5. My God, casting myself wholly on Thy fatherly providence, I renounce all care and solicitude for to-morrow concerning anything belonging to this life.

6. I offer unto Thee, O my God, this desire and resolution of my heart, that notwithstanding my continual indevotion, my distractions, and defects, etc., I will never abandon the exercises of an internal life.

7. My desire is always to be in the lowest place, beneath all creatures, according to my demerits.

8. For Thy love, O my God, I renounce all inordinate affections to particular friends or kindred.

Section 2. *Draw me, O God; we will run after Thee, because of the odour of Thy precious ointments.*

1. For Thy love, O my God, I resign myself to want necessary clothing, or to be deprived of what I have.

2. I resign myself patiently to bear with the rebellion of my

corrupt nature, and the difficulty of resisting its unruly passions—yea, and to use all vigilance against it.

3. For Thy love I renounce all seeking after curious and unnecessary knowledge.

4. I renounce sensual contentment in sleep and other bodily refreshment, being desirous to admit no more of them than shall be necessary, and in obedience to Thy will.

5. My God, through Thy grace, neither hard usage nor mere bodily want shall force me to seek a change of my present condition.

6. My God, I consecrate myself to Thee alone, for the remainder of my life to pursue the exercises of an internal life, leaving the fruit of my efforts to Thy holy will.

7. For Thy love, and in conformity to Thy blessed will, I resign myself to be abandoned by all creatures, so as to have none to have recourse to but Thee only.

8. When obedience or charity shall require it, I renounce all rashness and forwardness to judge the actions of others, employing my severity in censuring myself only.

SEC. 3. *My God and all my good, in Thy heavenly will is life; but death is in mine. Not my will, therefore, but Thine be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

1. For Thy love, O my God, I resign myself to be deprived of the gifts and privileges which I naturally most affect, and to see them conferred on the person for whom I have the greatest aversion.

2. I resign myself not only to want the esteem or favour of my Superiors, but also to be despised, and hardly—yea, injuriously treated by them.

3. When through my demerits I deserve ill-usage from them, I will be sorry and humbled for my fault, and bless Thee for punishing it so lightly in this life.

4. O tepidity, I do detest thee!

5. I resign myself, and even desire to find such usage in this world that I may know and feel it to be only a place of exile.

6. My God, whatsoever affliction Thou shalt suffer to befall me, through Thy grace I will never omit nor shorten my daily appointed recollections.

7. I offer myself to Thee, O my God, to be entirely disposed of by Thee, both in life and death. Only let me love Thee, and that is sufficient for me.

8. Whatsoever defect, natural or otherwise, shall be in me, either in body or mind, by which I may incur the dislike of others, I willingly embrace such occasions of humiliation.

SEC. 4. *My Lord Jesus, Thou Who art truth hast said, My yoke is easy and My burden light.*

1. I have received from Thy hands a cross of religious penitential discipline ; through Thy grace I will continue to bear it till my death, never seeking any ways to lighten it or escape from it by external employments or by other means.

2. For Thy love, O my God, and in conformity with Thy will, I resign myself to die when, where, and in what manner Thou shalt ordain.

3. I am content to see others make greater progress in spirit, and do more good in Thy Church than myself.

4. I renounce all that satisfaction and false peace which is got by yielding to my inordinate passions.

5. My God, till Thou hast humbled that great pride which is in me, do not spare to send me daily more and greater humiliations and mortifications.

6. I offer myself unto Thee, to suffer with patience whatsoever desolations, obscurity of mind, or deadness of affection shall befall me in a spiritual course ; notwithstanding all which, through Thy grace, I will never neglect a serious tending to Thee.

7. I am content to serve Thee with those mean talents that Thou hast given me.

8. I resign myself to such painful and base offices as my proud and slothful nature doth abhor, whensoever obedience, charity, or Thy will shall impose them upon me.

SEC. 5. *My God, Thou art faithful, and wilt not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able; but wilt with the temptation give an issue that we may be able to bear it.*

1. My God, my desire is to serve Thee gratis like a son, and not as a mercenary.

2. I came into religion to suffer and to serve; I renounce, therefore, all desire of procuring ease, plenty, or positions of authority.

3. For love of Thee, O my God, I resign myself to follow Thee, by whatsoever ways, external or internal, that Thou shalt conduct me, although I be unable to understand them, nor can see how there can be any good results from them.

4. I am content to see all become weary and desirous to be rid of me.

5. I am resigned to want whatsoever gifts or graces are unnecessary for my salvation.

6. For love of Thee, O my God, and in submission to Thy will, I renounce all inordinate love and intercourse with the world, that so I may attend to Thee only.

7. I adore and humbly submit myself to Thy most wise and secret judgments concerning my death or future state.

8. I renounce all obstinacy in defending mine own opinions and all desire of victory in discussions.

SEC. 6. *My God, Who is like unto Thee, Who hast Thy dwelling most high, yet humblest Thyself to regard the things which are (done) in heaven and earth?*

1. I resign myself to abide in this place and in this present state of life wherein Thou hast put me; neither will I seek or ever procure a change for any outward sufferings till Thou shalt appoint.

2. Let all creatures scorn, abandon, and persecute me, provided Thou, O my God, wilt accompany and assist me; Thou alone sufficest for me.

3. Through Thy grace I will never cease to approach nearer and nearer to Thee by prayer and abstraction from creatures.

4. I resign myself, whensoever necessity, obedience, or charity shall require it, to visit and assist anyone lying sick, though of an infectious or horrible disease.

5. I am content that those who are nearest to me in blood or friendship should be so averted from me as to abhor my very name.

6. I heartily renounce affection for all, even venial imperfections and the occasions of them.

7. I renounce all sense of ownership in any dignity or office that I have or may have hereafter.

8. I desire to be as detached from the world as if I were already dead and buried.

SEC. 7. *My God, it is my only good to adhere to Thee, Who art the God of my heart and my portion for ever.*

1. I offer myself to Thee to be afflicted with whatsoever temptation, external or internal, Thou shalt permit to befall me; and however often I fall I will not yield to dejection of mind, but will rise up as soon as I shall be enabled by Thy grace.

2. I resign myself to follow Thee, O my Lord Jesus, in the poverty of which Thou hast given me an example, renouncing all sense of ownership in anything, and being contented and pleased to enjoy only what shall be necessary.

3. I resign myself, not only to be held in disfavour by my Superiors, but also to see those most favoured that are most averted from me.

4. My God, although Thou shouldst kill me, yet will I never cease to hope and trust in Thee.

5. I am content not to learn or know more than Thou wouldst have me to know.

6. I offer myself to all manner of contradictions and injuries from my Superiors or brethren, to be endured in patience, silence, and without complaining.

7. I renounce all impatience and unquietness for my many defects and hourly imperfections.

8. I offer unto Thee my desire and resolution never to relinquish an internal spiritual course, notwithstanding any difficulties whatsoever.

SEC. 8. *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth! All the earth is full of Thy glory. Glory be to Thee Most High.*

1. For Thy love, O my God, and in conformity to Thy holy will, I resign myself unto Thee, with all that I am, have, can do, or suffer, in soul, body, goods, fame, friends, etc., both for time and eternity.

2. For Thy love I renounce all desire of authority, especially all charge over the souls of others.

3. I resign myself, whensoever Thou shalt call me to it, to sacrifice my life, in what manner soever Thou shalt ordain, for the defence of Thy Catholic truth, trusting in Thy merciful promise that Thou wilt assist me in such trials.

4. My God, let me be the object of the contempt and hatred of all creatures, provided that I may love Thee and enjoy Thy presence and grace.

5. Jesus, Who art the Prince of Peace, and Whose habitation is in peace, I offer my heart unto Thee, that Thou mayest establish a firm peace in it, calming the passions that so often rise in it.

6. I renounce all affection to speaking.

7. I resign myself in sickness to be a burden on others, so that all should become weary of me.

8. I renounce all readiness to listen to or believe any ill of others, and much more to spread evil reports.

SEC. 9. *I adore Thee, O my God, the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords, Who dwellest in unapproachable light: to Thee be glory and eternal dominion. Amen.*

1. I resign and offer myself unto Thee, to follow the guidance of Thy Holy Spirit in an internal life, through bitter and sweet, light and darkness, in life and in death.

2. I renounce all solicitous designs to gain the affections of Superiors or of others with an intention to procure rest or contentment to nature.

3. I am content with whatever Thou shalt provide for my sustenance, howsoever mean and distasteful it be.

4. I resign myself in the agony of death to endure whatsoever pains, fright, or temptations Thou shalt permit to befall me; only let my spirit always adhere to Thee.

5. My God, I here again renew my vows of religious profession, consecrating myself and all that I have or can do to Thy glory and service only.

6. I resolve through Thy grace that my great and daily

defects shall not destroy my peace of mind nor confidence in Thy goodness.

7. I resign myself, for the humiliation and good of my soul, to be deprived of any talents and gifts that may in any way cause me to be esteemed by others.

SEC. 10. *Blessed is the man whose hope is only in the Name of Thee, my God, and that regardeth not vanities and deceits.*

1. Though Thou shouldst always hide Thy face from me—yea, my God, although Thou shouldst kill me—yet will I never cease to approach Thee, and to put my whole trust in Thee only.

2. I consecrate my whole life to Thee, to be spent in continually tending towards Thee, not presuming to expect lofty contemplations or extraordinary graces, but referring to Thy holy pleasure whether I shall ever be raised above my present mean exercises.

3. I resign myself to be esteemed capable only of the humblest and most laborious offices, and if they shall be imposed upon me I will not avoid them.

4. I resign myself to be guided only by Thee and Thy holy inspirations.

5. My God, I resign myself to Thee alone, to live and die in that state and degree of the spiritual life to which it shall seem good to Thee to bring me; only I beseech Thee that I may not be negligent in co-operating with Thy grace and holy inspirations.

6. I resign myself to suffer the extremity of heat and cold, and to want the comfort of all relief against heat, and of necessary clothes against cold.

7. I resign myself to be obliged to take meats and drinks repugnant to my nature.

8. I resign myself to see others, my inferiors, provided with all things, and myself only neglected.

SEC. 11. *Our Lord is my light and salvation: whom, then, should I fear?*

1. There is no spiritual exercise so displeasing to my nature that I would not embrace, if I knew or believed such to be Thy will.

2. Through Thy grace, my God, I will not rest with affection in any of Thy gifts, however sublime ; but will only use them as means to come to Thee, Who art my only uncreated, universal, and infinite good.

3. I esteem this life to be a mere prison or place of exile.

4. My God, I offer my soul unto Thee, that Thou mayest establish a firm peace in it, not to be interrupted, as it is now, by every contradiction and cross.

5. I resign myself to have Superiors, and others whom my nature would wish to be friendly, to be in all things a continual contradiction and cross to me.

6. For Thy love I would be content rather to have no use of my tongue, than thus continually to offend Thee with it.

7. Let all creatures be silent before Thee, and do Thou, O my God, alone speak unto me ; in Thee alone is all that I desire to know or love.

8. My God, I know that to fly from Thy cross is to fly from Thee that didst die on it ; welcome, therefore, be Thy crosses and trials.

SEC. 12. *My God, with Thee is the fountain of life, and in Thy light we shall see light.*

1. My God, to Thee only do I consecrate the remainder of my life, purposing to account no business to be necessary, but only to tend to Thee by prayer and abnegation.

2. I resign myself, if such be Thy pleasure, even to be deprived of the use of mine eyes, that are still so much delighted with vanity, curiosity, and all distracting objects.

3. O that I were nothing, that so Thou, my God, mayest be all in all.

4. I resign myself to be deprived of a certain habitation, and to live as a wanderer in the world, so that none should take care of me or own me.

5. My God, my desire is to serve Thee in a state wherein I may be deprived of all ownership and choice in all things, as well internal as external : do Thou, my Lord, choose for me.

6. In conformity to Thy heavenly will, O my God, I accept the pain of my continual indevotion, my unruly passions, and

(almost) irremediable imperfections, and I will with patience await Thy good time when I shall be enabled by Thy grace to rectify them.

7. For Thy love I renounce all conversation and correspondence, which I find to be occasions of my falling into defects, by nourishing inordinate affections or unquietness.

8. I renounce the folly of being disquieted with seeing that others are not such as I would have them to be, since I cannot make myself such as I fain would be.

SEC. 13. *I know, my God, that Thou art the God that triest hearts and lovest simplicity, therefore in the simplicity of my heart I offer myself unto Thee.*

1. O my God, when will the time come when Thou wilt lead my soul into Thy solitude?

2. For Thy love I renounce all complacency in any kind of talent or skill in the arts (as far as any of these are in me), consecrating all that by Thy gift is in me to Thy glory and service only.

3. I utterly renounce all familiarity and dangerous intercourse or correspondence with persons of a different sex.

4. My God, it is Thou that hast placed me in this my present condition, and Thou only shalt displace me.

5. O tepidity, I abhor thee. My God, teach me an effectual remedy against it; let not my latter end be worse than my beginning.

6. My God, I offer unto Thee my heart, that whatsoever unknown inordinate desires are in it, Thou mayest teach me to mortify them by any ways Thou shalt please.

7. I offer unto Thee, my God, this desire of my heart, that at last, this day, I may begin perfectly to serve Thee, having spent so much time unprofitably.

8. Feed me, O Lord, with the bread of tears, and give me drink in tears according to the measure that Thou shalt think fit.

SEC. 14. *My Lord and my God, from Thee are all things, by Thee are all things, to Thee are all things: to Thee only be glory, love, and obedience for ever.*

1. My God, if Thou wilt that I be in light, be Thou blessed for it; and if Thou wilt that I be in darkness, still be Thou blessed for it. Let both light and darkness, life and death, praise Thee.

2. Blessed be Thy holy Name that my heart doth not (and never may it) find rest in anything that I seek or love inordinately, whilst I do not love it in Thee and for Thee only.

3. I resign myself to live in a state or place where I shall daily have my health or life endangered.

4. I resign myself to suffer in Purgatory whatsoever pains, and for as long a time, as shall seem good to Thee.

5. Through Thy grace and assistance, O my God, no hard usage, nor the desire of finding rest to my nature, shall force me to change my present condition.

6. I resign myself to take part in any calamity, disgrace, etc., that Thy Divine providence shall permit to befall the country or community in which I live.

7. I renounce all abiding affection for sensible pleasure in my recollections, resolving to adhere to Thee, as well in aridities as in consolations.

8. My God, I am nothing, I have nothing, I desire nothing, but Jesus, and to see Him in peace in Jerusalem.

EXERCISES OF PURE LOVE TO GOD.

THE FIRST EXERCISE.

1. I rejoice in all Thy perfections, O my God—in Thy wisdom, goodness, power, and all Thy other Divine prerogatives and perfections.

2. Let it suffice for me that Thou, my most benign and loving Father, art infinitely happy and rich.

3. I rejoice at Thy presence, my God, in heaven, where Thou reignest as in Thy kingdom, and that Thou art there worshipped, adored, and loved by all Thy Angels and Saints.

4. So that, were it in my power, I would love and honour

Thee with all the love and worship wherewith the angels and Saints love Thee.

5. I rejoice in all the love and service that just men (especially the perfect) in former ages, in the present, or future, have and do, or shall show towards Thee.

6. And I desire to love Thee with their love, and would for Thy love perform, if it lay in my power, all their works, as well internal as external, and would undergo all their labours and endure all their afflictions.

7. I heartily rejoice in all the good things that are in the elect servants of God, but especially for the wonderful gifts of the perfect, and that they are by Thee, O my God, illuminated, inflamed, and sanctified.

8. My love and desire towards Thee, O my God, is such that were it possible for me and acceptable to Thee, I would of each soul (especially my own) make a heavenly kingdom, that Thou mightest be beloved and praised in so many heavens by the dwellers in them.

The Second Exercise.

1. I do here, in Thy presence, O my God, esteem myself as nothing, and whatsoever I have, natural or supernatural, I acknowledge it to be Thine only.

2. And as my God is all good, and all good things come from Him only, I greatly rejoice, and with all my heart confess that I am nothing, can do nothing, and have nothing ; for my being and ability, and all I have, are Thine and from Thee.

3. I do here, in the presence of God, hold myself to be the vilest of creatures, and because I cannot feel this, having on the contrary a good opinion of myself, I acknowledge that I am the proudest and most ungrateful of creatures, and I bewail myself as such.

4. O my God, I love Thee and desire to love Thee, with a love pure and free from all self-interest or personal gain.

5. I love Thee, my Lord, with a persevering love, purposing by the help of Thy grace never to be separated from Thee by sin.

6. And if I were to live for millions of years, I would still ever remain Thy faithful servant and lover.

7. I wish all creatures would adore and serve Thee, and that infidels be converted to Thy faith and sinners to a good life, and all this only for Thy supreme honour and glory.

8. I wish that neither myself nor any other had ever offended Thee, my God, and that in particular I myself had ever served Thee faithfully from the instant of my birth.

The Third Exercise.

1. I desire that I myself and all others may henceforth serve and love Thee faithfully, for the love and goodwill I bear Thee.

2. I rejoice and congratulate Thee that Thou, my Lord God, art so rich and happy, that all creatures can add nothing to Thy happiness;

3. Nevertheless, because Thou mayest have external honour and worship from Thy creatures, I wish sincerely that all of them may perform the service and worship due unto Thee in the best way they can.

4. I am sorry for all the sins and indignities that are, have, or shall be done unto Thee, by myself or others,

5. And principally, because these sins are injuries done to Thy Divine Majesty, Who only art worthy to be honoured and served by all Thy creatures.

6. I joyfully accept all that is pleasing to God, be it prosperity or adversity, sweet or bitter, and this merely for the love I bear Him.

7. I am sorry for all that displeases God, or is contrary to His Divine will, and this only for the love of Him and His glory.

8. I congratulate with Thee, O my God, upon all Thy blessedness and perfections, which Thou hadst from all eternity, as Thy omnipotence, wisdom, goodness, and so forth.

The Fourth Exercise.

1. I congratulate with Thee, and am glad that Thou hast need of no extrinsic thing, but art in Thyself most rich and sufficient for Thyself and all creatures.

2. I likewise with Thee, O my Lord, rejoice in the sweet

ordinance and disposition of heaven and earth, and for everything in the marvellous creation of this world.

3. I approve and rejoice in all the judgments of my Lord God, as well manifest as secret, concerning the devils, the souls of the damned, the unbaptized children in Limbo, the souls in Purgatory, and the wicked in this world.

4. I rejoice with Thee, O my God, in all the praise and worship which the Angels and Saints in heaven and Thy servants on earth yield unto Thee.

5. Because I find myself altogether insufficient to praise my God, I invite the help of all holy Angels and creatures;

6. And with them I join my own soul, with all its powers, that all of them together may glorify my God for His infinite perfections.

7. I am sorry I am not perfect, and wish (so far as it may please God) that I may be perfect in order the more worthily to praise Thee;

8. And not out of any advantage to myself, but purely for the love I bear to Thy Divine Majesty, Who art infinitely worthy of more love and honour than all creatures, that are or can be, are able to perform towards Thee.

The Fifth Exercise.

1. Exult and rejoice, O my soul, for all the perfection and good things that are in thy God.

2. I rejoice in the dignity that our Saviour Christ now hath in heaven, and congratulate Him on it.

3. Blessed be Thy Eternal Father, O Lord Jesus, Who so abundantly bestowed these felicities on Thee; do Thou blessedly and gloriously enjoy them for all eternity.

4. I congratulate the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the Angels and Saints in heaven for the glory and happiness which they now enjoy;

5. And I praise and exalt my God for His great goodness and liberality shown towards His faithful and elect friends.

6. Since all creatures together are unable to praise Thee, my God, according to the very least worth that is in Thee, I exceedingly rejoice that Thou Thyself, and Thou only, art able sufficiently and perfectly to praise and glorify Thyself.

7. I rejoice indeed in this, and heartily desire Thee to praise and glorify Thyself for evermore.

8. Yea, I heartily crave of Thee that Thou mayest incessantly and mightily praise Thyself, since Thou only art able to do it, and deservest it.

AFFECTIONS AND DESIRES.

(To be used according to the Disposition of the Soul.)

1. Grant me to do what Thou commandest, O my Lord, and command what Thou wilt.

2. O life of my soul!

3. Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

4. My heart is ready, O my God, my heart is ready.

5. Lo, here I am; send me.

6. O Lord, what is there in heaven, or what on earth, that I would have in comparison with Thee?

7. Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?

8. O woe is to me, that my sojourning is prolonged!

9. Thou knowest, O Lord, that I love Thee, and will bestow my life for Thee.

10. Even as the hart thirsteth after the fountain of waters, so doth my soul thirst after Thee, O God.

11. I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ.

12. When shall I come and appear before the face of our Lord?

13. I beseech the Heavenly King to cause me (who am much grieved for want of it) to come to the sight of Him Whom I so much love.

14. Lord, if I have found favour in Thy sight, show unto me Thy face.

15. O my soul, and all that is within me, bless ye our Lord, and praise His holy Name.

16. I will bless our Lord at all times, His praise shall ever be in my mouth.

17. Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Thy glory.

18. O my God, my God, look upon me; why hast Thou forsaken me?

19. O my God, my helper, I will hope in Thee.

20. O Lord, Thy mercy is in heaven, and Thy truth reacheth to the clouds.

21. To Thee have I lifted up mine eyes, Who dwellest in heaven.

22. My Beloved is mine, and I am His.

23. Thy kingdom is a kingdom for ever, and Thy reign is for all generations and generations.

24. Thou hast wounded my heart, my Spouse, Thou hast wounded my heart.

25. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you shall find my Beloved, tell Him that I languish with love.

26. Come, Thou my Beloved, come.

27. Whither is thy Beloved gone? whither is thy Beloved turned aside? and we will seek Him with thee.

28. Draw me after Thee; we shall run in the odour of Thy ointments.

29. Thou whom my soul loveth, show unto me where Thou dost eat, where Thou dost lodge.

30. Show me Thy face; let Thy voice sound in mine ears.

31. I have sought for Him Whom my soul loveth; I have sought for Him, and have not found Him.

32. When I had gone a little farther, I found Him Whom my soul loveth.

33. My soul melted as He spoke to me.

34. I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength, my firm foundation, my refuge, and my deliverer.

35. Enlighten mine eyes, that I may never sleep in death; lest mine enemy may come at length to say, I have prevailed against him.

36. Thou art worthy, O Lord God, to have glory and honour and power and praise.

37. Let Thy works, O Lord, confess unto Thee, and let Thy Saints praise Thee.

38. Though I were to die for it, yet I would not deny Thee.

39. Jesu, Jesu, Jesu, etc.

40. Have mercy on me, O Lord, have mercy on me, because my soul doth trust in Thee.

41. Blessed are they who dwell in Thy house, O Lord ; they praise Thee for ever and ever.

42. O all my hope ! O all my glory ! O all my refuge and all my joy.

43. O life of my soul, and the pleasant repose of my spirit !

44. Mortify in me whatsoever displeaseth Thy sight, and make me according to Thy heart.

45. Wound me, O Lord, wound the most inward part of my soul with the darts of Thy love,

46. And inebriate me with the wine of Thy perfect charity.

47. Too late have I known Thee, O infinite goodness !

48. Too late have I loved Thee, O beauty so ancient and so new !

49. Woe to me, I have loved Thee not !

50. Blind I was that saw Thee not.

51. Thou wert within me, and I went seeking Thee abroad ;

52. But now that I have found Thee, though late, suffer not, good Lord, that I ever leave Thee. Amen. Amen. Amen.

AFFECTIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SOUL HERSELF, TO SAINTS, Etc.

These may be used with advantage now and then, when the soul is not disposed for affections addressed immediately to God (see Book III., Chapter XIV., pp. 311, 312).

1. O my soul, when wilt thou be ready to follow the humility of thy Lord, Jesus Christ ?

2. When shall the example of His patience shine forth in thee ?

3. When wilt thou be wholly free from passions and vicious affections ?

4. When wilt thou peaceably and gently endure all tribulation and temptation ?

5. When wilt thou perfectly love thy God ?

6. When wilt thou be pure, simple, and resigned before Him ?

7. How long will it be ere thou be no more hindered from His chaste embraces ?

8. O that thou didst fervently love God !

9. O that thou didst inseparably cleave unto thy chief good !

10. O my soul, where is thy love? where is thy treasure? where is thy desire? where is all thy good? where is thy God? when shalt thou be with Him? when shalt thou most happily enjoy Him?

11. If thou hast sinned and art wounded, behold, thy God—behold, thy Physician is ready to cure thee.

12. Peradventure thou art afraid because He is thy judge; but take heart, for He Who is thy judge is also thy advocate.

13. His mercy is infinitely greater than is or can be thy iniquity.

14. Thy God is most gentle, most sweet; He is wholly amiable, wholly desirable, and loveth all things which He has created.

15. Let not thine imperfections discourage thee too much, for thy God doth not despise thee because thou art frail and infirm; but loveth thee exceedingly, because thou desirest and labourest to be more perfect.

16. Arise, my soul; arise out of the dust, thou captive daughter of Sion.

17. Arise, forsake the wretchedness of thy negligent life.

18. How long must thou take pleasure in perils? how long wilt thou esteem anxieties and torments to be rest? how long wilt thou securely sleep in destruction?

19. Return unto the Lord thy God, for He expecteth thee.

20. Make haste, be not slack, for He is ready to receive thee.

21. Join thyself to Jesus, He will illuminate thee.

22. Alas, my soul, how ungrateful hast thou been to thy God!

23. He hath promised those things unto thee which neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor can the heart of man comprehend.

24. Love Him, then; love Him of Whom thou art beloved; attend to Him that attendeth to thee, and seek Him that seeketh thee.

25. Why art thou sad, O my soul? and why art thou troubled? Hope in our Lord, for He will be thy comfort and solace.

26. Sweet and amiable Jesus is present with thee; thou must with love and reverence attend unto Him.

AN EXAMPLE OF ACTS WHICH THE SOUL MAY EXERCISE TOWARDS GOD AS ABSENT FROM HER.

1. I will bless our Lord at all times, His praise shall ever be in my mouth.

2. Our Lord have mercy on us, enlighten His countenance upon us, and take pity on us.

3. It is good for me to seek after our Lord and get near unto Him, for He is our hope and our all.

AN EXAMPLE IN WHICH GOD IS SUPPOSED TO ADDRESS THE SOUL.

1. Son, it behoveth thee to give all for all, and reserve nothing to thyself.

2. Son, where is true peace to be found? Is it not in Me?

3. Son, thou canst not attain to perfect liberty if thou dost not wholly forsake thyself.

4. Son, abide constant, and hope in Me: this is all in all.

AN EXERCISE OF DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

1. Hail, sweet Mary! hail, most sacred Virgin! whom God before all ages chose for His most sacred Mother;

2. Thou art the beginning of life, the gate of grace, the haven of the world suffering shipwreck;

3. Obtain for me, I beseech thee, pardon of my sins and the grace of the Holy Ghost;

4. That I may diligently worship, chastely and fervently love thy Son my Saviour, and thee the Mother of mercy.

5. O my Lady, receive me for thy poor servant; adopt me, O Mother, for thy son;

6. Hail, sweet Mary! whom God by a most honourable privilege did preserve from sin.

7. Do not repel me, a wicked sinner; do not despise and reject me, defiled with the filth of sin;

8. But hear me, a miserable wretch, crying unto thee; comfort me, desiring thee; and help me, trusting in thee. Amen.

AN EXERCISE TO THE HOLY ANGELS, ESPECIALLY TO OUR ANGEL GUARDIAN.

1. I salute you, O holy spirits, and with all my heart congratulate you on your happiness, who continually contemplate the Divine face and all-satiating goodness.

2. Thou, O my Lord, hast made these holy spirits angels for my benefit, and hast commanded them to keep me in all Thy ways.

3. They therefore assist us with great care, and with watchful endeavour at all times and in all places succour us.

4. They present our sighs and tears to Thee, O Lord; they inflame our wills, illuminate our understandings, and replenish our minds with holy thoughts.

5. They walk with us in all our ways, rejoicing at our virtues and saddened at our vices.

6. Their love towards us is very great.

7. They help such as take pains; they protect such as are at rest; they encourage such as fight; they crown the conquerors; they rejoice with such as joy in Thee; and they suffer with such as suffer for Thee.

8. O my dear Angel guardian, govern, protect, and defend me; illuminate, comfort, and direct me, now and for evermore.

AN EXERCISE TOWARDS OUR HOLY FATHER ST. BENEDICT.*

1. Hail, most blessed and glorious Father! I congratulate thee with all my heart on thy glory and grace with God.

2. In particular I praise and magnify the Divine goodness in that it gave thee the grace in the flower of thy youth to seek after the happiness of the future life alone,

3. And to forsake the vain pleasures of this life; the solace of thy parents, kindred, and country; the desire of human

* This was Father Baker's devotion to St. Benedict in thanksgiving for his vocation.

sciences and learning; and all that might not be needful towards attaining that happiness.

4. I praise and magnify the Divine goodness for leading thee into solitude, and there providing all bodily necessaries for His holy service and thine own soul's good;

5. And especially for vouchsafing to become thy immediate master and director, inspiring thee and teaching thee continually what to do.

6. I praise and glorify the Divine goodness for bestowing on thee the gift of perseverance, by which thou didst remain constant in such perfect divine service from thy call to the end of thy life;

7. So that thy expiration was aspiration, according to what St. Gregory said of thee: 'His last breath was prayer'—passing from the faithful contemplation of this life to the real and beautiful contemplation of the other.

8. And since I am called by Divine grace (as I truly hope) to live according to thy holy Rule for my salvation and perfection, vouchsafe thy intercession that I may, through God's grace, live according to it, and die perfected therein, for without His grace I can do nothing.

A DAILY EXERCISE.

(Taken from Blosius.)

The following exercise may be used according to the directions given in Book III., Chapter XIV., p. 314.

1. Contrition.

1. My Lord and my God, what shall I, sinful wretch, say unto Thee?

2. I bow the knees of my heart, acknowledging in Thy sight my manifold and grievous sins.

3. I have sinned, O God, I have sinned and done evil before Thee.

4. I have sinned against Thee, my most omnipotent Creator.

5. I have sinned against Thee, my most merciful Redeemer.

6. I have sinned against Thee, my most liberal Benefactor.

7. Woe unto me, I have continually been most ungrateful to Thee.

8. I am a most vile creature—dust and ashes.

9. Be merciful, O Lord ; be merciful, be merciful unto me.

10. O would to God I had never offended Thee !

11. Would to God I had never resisted and hindered the operation of Thy grace in my heart !

12. Would to God I had always pleased Thee and observed Thy holy will and inspirations !

13. My purpose and firm resolution, through Thy grace, is to avoid henceforth whatsoever may offend Thee, and rather to die than willingly to provoke Thy wrath and hatred against me. Therefore, O merciful Jesus, by Thy most bitter Passion and all the merits of Thy most Sacred Humanity, I beseech Thee to pardon and blot out all my sins.

14. Wash me with Thy Precious Blood ; heal, cleanse, and sanctify me.

2. Reflections on the Merits and Passion of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

1. I adore, glorify, and bless Thee, O my only Saviour Jesus Christ, for all Thy unspeakable mercies and benefits.

2. O Son of the living God, I most humbly give thanks to Thee, because for me Thou hast vouchsafed in Thy infinite love—

(1) To become man.

(2) To be born in a poor stable and laid in a manger.

(3) To suffer poverty with Thy poor Virgin Mother.

(4) For more than thirty years to be wearied with continual labours for our good.

(5) Out of inexpressible anguish to sweat drops of blood.

(6) To be ignominiously apprehended by sinners, unworthily bound, and arraigned before Thine enemies.

(7) To be shamefully defiled with spittle, cruelly beaten, and dishonourably clothed with a white and purple garment, like a fool and mock king.

(8) To be unjustly condemned to death.

(9) To be cruelly torn with whips and crowned with thorns.

(10) To be fastened most painfully with nails to the cross.

(11) To be inhumanly presented with gall and vinegar to drink in Thy extreme thirst.

(12) For me to hang naked, wounded, and condemned in inconceivable torments many hours on the cross.

(13) There to shed Thy most Precious Blood, and to offer Thy life as a propitiation for my sins.

(14) To be sealed up in a grave, whence, notwithstanding, Thou didst raise Thyself, conquering death for me.

3. O most Blessed Jesus, my only hope and salvation, grant that I may love Thee with a most fervent and constant love.

4. O rosy wounds of my Lord, inflicted for me, I salute you. With what love were you suffered by Him! And what love do you deserve from me!

3. Acts of Humility, etc.

1. Behold, O most merciful Saviour, I, a most wretched sinner, in imitation of Thy most glorious humility, submit myself to all creatures, acknowledging myself unworthy to live on earth; and, after the example of Thy admirable charity, I with sincere love, according to my ability, embrace all those that afflict or persecute me.

2. For Thy love I renounce all iniquity and vanity, all inordinate pleasures, all self-will and immortification.

3. I relinquish and reject all things below Thee; and, above all, I make choice of Thee as my only good.

4. I commit and resign myself entirely to Thee.

5. I desire and beseech Thee that Thy perfect and well-pleasing will may be accomplished in me and concerning me, in time and eternity.

6. For Thy love and glory I am ready to want any consolation, and to suffer any injury, contempt, or tribulation. If such be Thy pleasure, my Heavenly Lord, let me live in the same poverty and afflictions that Thou didst suffer all Thy life.

4. Address to the Blessed Virgin Mary, etc.

1. O Mary, most sweet Virgin Mother of our Lord, glorious Queen of Heaven, intercede with thy Son for me.

2. O merciful protectress of the oppressed,

3. Support of the weak,

4. Refuge of afflicted sinners, look with thine eyes of pity on me.

5. By thine intercession let my heart be inflamed with ardent love for our Lord Jesus Christ.

6. O all you glorious Angels and blessed Saints, intercede for me.

7. O thou blessed Angel appointed by God to be my guardian and faithful companion in this vale of tears, pray for me.

8. O thou my special patron, St. Benedict, intercede on my behalf unto our Lord, that, living according to thy Rule and example, I may with thee contemplate His beatifying face.

5. Petitions to our Lord for Grace, etc.

1. My Lord and my God, with the company and assistance of these Thy beloved Saints, I boldly make known unto Thee my miseries and defects, beseeching Thee to cure them all.

2. Mortify in me whatsoever is displeasing to Thee.

3. Adorn me with merits and graces acceptable in Thy sight.

4. Give me true humility, obedience, meekness, patience, and charity.

5. Grant me perfect control over my tongue and all my senses and members.

6. Give me true internal purity, nakedness, liberty, and profound introversion.

7. Illuminate my soul with thy most pure Divine light.

8. I acknowledge that Thou art intimately and immediately present to me, and in the very centre of my spirit.

9. Possess my memory and understanding, and inflame my will and affections with Thy love.

10. Lead me into the naked depths of my spirit, and transform me into Thee, my God and my origin; that I may clearly know Thee, ardently love Thee, be immediately united to Thee, and, by a quiet fruition, rest in Thee, to the glory of Thy Name. Amen.

6. Supplication in Behalf of the Church, etc.

1. O my God, be graciously merciful to all those whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy most Precious Blood.

2. Convert all miserable sinners to Thee.

3. Restore all heretics and schismatics unto the bosom of Thy Church, illuminate all infidels that are ignorant of Thee.

4. Be present to all that are in tribulation or in necessity.

5. Bless my parents, kindred, friends, acquaintances, and benefactors. Give unto the living pardon and grace, and to all the faithful departed light and rest everlasting.

7. Adoration, etc., of the Most Blessed Trinity.

1. O most holy, glorious, and ever-blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; One omnipotent, most wise, most holy, and most merciful God ;

2. I in the profound abyss of my own nothing adore Thee, my most gracious God.

3. Vouchsafe to teach and assist me, whose hope is in Thee only.

4. O Heavenly Father, by Thine infinite power establish my memory in Thee, fill it with holy and divine thoughts. O eternal Son of Thy co-eternal Father, by Thine infinite wisdom illuminate my understanding, and adorn it with the knowledge of Thy supreme excellence and mine own incomprehensible vileness.

5. O Holy Spirit, the most pure love of the Father and Son, by Thine infinite goodness inflame my soul with the ardour of Divine love.

6. O my God and all my good, O that I could love and praise Thee as perfectly and incessantly as all Thy Angels and Saints do !

7. According to the utmost extent and capacity that Thou hast given me, I glorify, adore, love, and magnify Thee. But because I cannot worthily praise Thee, do Thou vouchsafe to praise and glorify Thyself in and by me.

8. If I had the love of all creatures, I would willingly expend it on Thee only.

8. Aspirations, etc.

1. My Lord and my God ;

2. O Being infinitely peaceable and infinitely amiable ;

3. O infinite abyss of goodness, infinitely sweet and desirable ;

4. O torrent of inestimable delights and joys ;

5. O my all-sufficient reward ;
6. Thou art my only immutable good.
7. What do I desire but Thee ?
8. O draw me after Thee ;
9. Inflame me with the fire of Thy love.
10. O my God, my God and my All,
11. Plunge me into the abyss of Thy Divinity ; consume me wholly, and make me one spirit with Thee, that Thou mayest take Thy delight in me.
12. O Jesus, do Thou alone live and reign in my soul.
13. My God, let me love Thee only, and that suffices me.
14. O my God, I desire to praise Thee, to bless Thee, and to glorify Thee for all eternity. Amen.

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